BX
8688
.P941
1999

AML

ANNUAL

1999

Lee Allred
Sherlene Hall Bartholomew
Pat Birkedahl
Scott Bronson
Harlow Soderborg Clark
Patricia Truxler Coleman
Thom Duncan
Eric A. Eliason
Eugene England
Edward A. Geary
Terryl Givens
Helynne H. Hansen
Janelle M. Higbee
Susan E. Howe
Neal W. Kramer
Gabi Kupitz
Richard Ouellette
Scott Parkin
Levi S. Peterson
Jana K. Remy
Jana K. Riess
Eric Samuelsen
Nola D. Smith
Phillip Synder

BX
8688
.P941
1999

Annual

of the

Association for Mormon Letters

1999

Papers from the Annual Meeting
28 February 1998
Westminster College
Salt Lake City

Edited by
Lavina Fielding Anderson

Association for Mormon Letters
Salt Lake City, Utah
1998

©1999 by the Association for Mormon Letters

After publication herein, all rights revert to the authors
The Association for Mormon Letters assumes no responsibility
for contributors' statements of fact or opinion.

The AML Annual, along with a quarterly newsletter and information about readings, lectures, and other activities, is a benefit of membership, $15 per calendar year. To pay these dues or receive information, please consult:

John S. Bennion, secretary
3117 JKHB
Brigham Young university
Provo, UT 84602
Provo, UT 84602
(801) 378-3419, john_bennion@byu.edu

HAROLD B. LEE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

CONTENTS

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Art and Advocacy: Politics and Mormon Letters
Neal W. Kramer 1

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

The Viper on the Hearth
Eric A. Eliason, Neal W. Kramer, Richard Ouellette, Jana K. Riess, Terryl Givens 9

The Works of Terry Tempest Williams
Jana K. Remy, Eugene England, Phillip Synder, Susan Howe, Scott Parkin 28

Many Mansions: LDS Genre Fiction in and out of the Mormon Market
Lee Allred, Pat Birkedahl, Scott Bronson, Thom Duncan 39

LITERARY ESSAYS

Liminality and Disruption: Cody Judy, *Gadianton,* and a Willing Sustaining of Belief
Nola D. Smith 47

The Vision of the Cowboy Jesus Ten Years Later
Levi S. Peterson 56

"A Representative Woman": President Mrs. Kimball and a Rhetoric of Deseret
Janelle M. Higbee 63

A Voice Unheard: Reflections on the Poetry of Florence Bale
Eric Samuelsen 72

"Let Your Light So Shine": Dean Hughes and the Mormonisms in His Fiction
Gabi Kupitz 80

Light and Delight
Harlow Söderborg Clark 87

Nebuchadnezzar Grazed by Daniel's God
Harlow Söderburg Clark 95

MORMON HUMOR

Sanpete County Humor: The Tales and the Tellers
Edward A. Geary 101

A Man Caught in the Middle: J. Golden Kimball as a Transitional Figure in Mormon History and Folklore
Eric A. Eliason 112

And the Bishop Only Laughed: Intellectuality, Irreverence, and Light-Mindedness in Neal Chandler's Anti-Hero Damon Boulder
Helynne H. Hansen 118

Ann Edwards Cannon Takes On Motherhood, Martha Stewart, and Marriage
Patricia Truxler Coleman 124

More Manic Mantic Mormon Antics: Recent Trends in Mormon Literary Humor
Sherlene Hall Bartholomew 129

Other papers given during this annual meeting were John L. Needham, "The Land Nobody Wanted: Mormonism's Lost Generation and the Making of the Mormon Culture Region," and Bethany Ann Clawson, "Joseph Smith, Going Like a Lamb to the Slaughter? A Counterview from the Poetry of *Times and Seasons.*" Paul Cox delivered the visiting writer's address but did not speak from a text.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS I

Art and Advocacy: Politics and Mormon Letters

Neal W. Kramer

The genesis of my remarks today begins with a brief moment browsing in Barnes and Noble about three years ago. There I picked up a collection of essays by the Romanian/French literary theorist Julia Kristeva and was struck by the title of a short piece, "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident" (292-300). Toril Moi, the volume's editor, describes Kristeva's thesis:

> Drawing on the experience of marginality and exile, whether physical or cultural, the intellectual can still spearhead a certain kind of subversion of Western bourgeois society. . . . [T]here are three groups of intellectual dissidents . . . : the intellectual who attacks political power directly (thus remaining within the very discourse of power that he is out to undo); the psychoanalyst whose major counterpart is religion; and the experimental writer who is out to undermine the law of symbolic language. (292)

Moi, a committed feminist herself, goes on to point out that in addition to the three groups named, "there is the subversive potential of women" (292).

Kristeva's intellectual point of departure is the master-slave dialectic.[1] She is very careful to define all power relationships in those terms. Power is not shared. Rather one either subjects others to oneself by virtue of one's power or is subject to the power of another. For Kristeva the great sources of power in our time are universalizing ideas like "the Greatest Number" or "Everyone's Idea of the Good." Intellectuals become enslaved or enslavers when they commit to these universalizing or totalizing ideas and the systems they generate. In fact, the submission to the authority of such ideas "induces a kind of pro-slavery mentality in the intellectual, who represents the supreme product of the systematic conjunction of Christianity and capitalist production" (293).[2] Kristeva sees the role of the 1contemporary intellectual as breaking out of the slave/master mode by working to subvert the institutions which authorize it. Thus, the intellectual's primary responsibility becomes the subversion of capitalism and Christianity.[3]

At about the same time, I heard an account of a session at the annual national meetings of teachers of composition and rhetoric, the 4 C's. The thrust of the presentation, by an outstanding and up-to-date teacher, was that a fundamental challenge facing anyone who wanted to teach young Mormons how to write was to get them to question and, by implication, to reject, their most deeply held beliefs, especially their commitment to the institution of the Mormon Church. The implication of the presentation, I think, is that people can become good writers and thinkers only after they have separated themselves from the tepid passion of their commitment to any institution. The thrust of this point of view, fairly standard among contemporary scholars, is to locate the ethical vitality of a community on its margins. This of course is to argue that the writer ought to seek the margins in order to find life; hence, the only viable ethico-political and literary goal in late capitalist society is subversion of the structures of power.

More recently, I ran across an article in *College Composition* that advocated a new ethic for teaching composition (Clark). The article suggested that rhetoric should be understood as a kind of travel, with a fluidity of location and encounter that changes the power relation implied by earlier modes of composition. The purpose of the model seems to be to decenter the relationship between writer and audience. By removing a writer/traveler from her home and sending her on the road, you also remove the authority the writer may have claimed by staking out a position with regard to any idea. Thus, the author travels in order to subvert her own authority and to dilute the power of her own ideas. It is a move designed to enthrone a sort of relativist tolerance as the ultimate virtue; but one of its consequences, paradoxically, is the virtual denial of the validity of all power and authority, even the authority of tolerance. In the words of Edward Said, "Identify yourself as transient in space, however, and you become a traveler whose project and purpose 'depends not on power but on motion . . . because the traveler *crosses over*, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions, all the time'" (11). The point is not just to subvert but willingly to abandon traditional forms of authority based on any kind of power.

Forgive me just one more account. The following is a quotation taken from a *New Yorker* essay by Kurt Andersen, speaking of the young film director Harmony Korine:

> Yes he is annoying. In an age when characters on a CBS sitcom can say [expletive deleted], annoyance is probably as close to outrage as anything artists can incite in people who aren't members of the Christian Coalition. It has become almost impossible to *épater les bourgeois*. Korine, however, does his best in *Gummo* to freak out the nice, *Shine*-loving independent-film audience: the dead cats, a retarded girl "playing" a retarded girl, the director appearing as a sloppy drunk who makes a pass at a half-naked, encephalitic dwarf. And it is pretty much plot-free.
>
> May we preemptively cut the kid a little slack? Korine may not be Rimbaud (he may not even be Beck), but he's talented and smart and ambitious in the right ways. Korine is a malcontent as young artists were once supposed to be malcontents–not in the disengaged, everything-sucks, nothing-matters fashion but fired up with specific and impolitic impatience at mediocrity and wall-to-wall normality. "I feel nothing in movies," he says. "I want to feel hatred, disgust, anything but boredom."

The point is that Korine is "talented and smart and ambitious" in all the right ways. Good art must incite; it must annoy; it must mock normalcy in the name of "impolitic impatience at mediocrity."[4]

All art is political and its politics must be radical.

At this point, you all must be wondering what's gotten into me. I have said hardly a word about Mormon letters and very little about the kinds of writing we have honored today. Allow me to try to pull out some of what I've learned from these encounters and try to establish a foundation for the rest of my talk. I will identify four assumptions associated with those examples that inform my presentation today.

The first assumption is that everyone in the audience today is an intellectual, someone whose primary skill is writing and whose primary currency is ideas. The world of Mormon letters is necessarily a world of intellectuals, even when our writing is directed toward children or teenagers. Kristeva's call to all of us to become dissidents, to subvert the complex Christian/capitalist society of the end of the twentieth century, challenges and threatens each of us.

The second assumption is that all art is rhetorical. That is, every story, every picture, every play is an act of communication. More than that, the stories we tell tend to want to persuade someone of something. And the realm of persuasion is necessarily a realm of power and authority.

The third assumption is that the current critical environment finds all discussions of power and authority to be inherently political. That is, discussions of power and authority center on relationships between individuals and institutions, with relationships between individuals also substantially defined by institutional affiliations. Notions of freedom often involve, as a result, liberating oneself from institutional entanglements. Simply put, to be free one must leave home.

The fourth assumption is that current orthodoxy requires art to incite, provoke, shock, or even attack its audience if it is to be art. The current orthodoxy is based on a political idea that defines art's effectiveness as its ability to negate prevailing cultural values. Art must never simply call into question; it must actively subvert its subject matter. Dialectical notions of art history and a naive ideology of progress feed and inform the orthodoxy.

Each assumption presents great challenges to Mormon letters. Taken together, these assumptions and their ideologies raise fundamental questions about how Mormon literature is to remain Mormon and how we are to think about being Mormon intellectuals–those of use who write and whose currency is ideas in words.

THE MORMON INTELLECTUAL AS DISSIDENT

It is not easy for me to consider the implications of Kristeva's ideas for Mormon letters because I suspect they have the potential to be quite dangerous for Mormons. I think Kristeva's awareness of the master-slave dialectic and its relation to intellectual life is powerful indeed. Are we all contributing to a mass slave mentality through our current intellectual efforts? Certainly all the traditional political terms we use to characterize ourselves are rendered meaningless by this new awareness. Kristeva's accusation renders superficial the fighting words of generations of Mormon intellectuals: conservative or liberal. Is it better to be a liberal slave or a conservative one? To be one or the other is to be decidedly *not* radical enough.

To become a dissident is to leave all other affiliations behind. It is to dedicate oneself to the subversion of something that must be destroyed, as Solzhenitsyn dedicated himself forever to the subversion of the Soviet Union. To become a Mormon dissident is to dedicate oneself to the subversion of Mormonism. It is to write not just a single one-thousand-page volume of *The Gulag Archipelago.* It is not even to write two. It is to be driven to write three thousand pages detailing as compellingly as possible the endlessly criminal acts of the Mormon regime. Our familiar titles "conservative Mormon," "liberal Mormon," "lapsed Mormon," or even "jack Mormon" have no vitality for the true dissident.

Today I wonder out loud about the pride we are coming to take in the use of this term. *Dissident* is tossed about and adopted much too cavalierly for my taste. To want to act like a dissident is as dangerous as labeling someone else a dissident. The slightest feeling of comfort we take when we hear the word *Mormon*, the slightest hint of fire in our bosoms during a testimony meeting, the tiniest thrill we experience when a Mormon accomplishes something of note, announces not dissidence but solidarity and community. My intuition tells me that most of us would rather be Mormon than not, even if we have consciously adopted that diminutive title, *jack*. Still, some of us are titillated by the possibility of becoming literary subversives or terrorists, hoping we might experience a momentary thrill by writing an essay or story we secretly know is nothing more than a dud. And we delight in the notoriety of would-be dissidence. Nevertheless, we also need to be reminded that there are real bombers out there.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

Perhaps the most influential critical orthodoxy of the day invites earnest and anxious questioning whenever power or authority is discovered. Suspicion of power and authority, always suspecting abuse of the one or the other, characterizes even the popular culture of investigative journalism. I fear that many Mormon intellectuals secretly idolize Woodward and Bernstein (or, should I say, Redford and Hoffmann?),[5] and covet the notoriety and fame a successful exposé will bring.

The temptation for Mormon writers associated with this approach is quite obvious. The institution closest to each of us is the Church–closer even than local government. The Church adopts as a matter of necessity the rhetoric of power, authority, and, yes, patriarchy. Once we develop a certain degree of facility with the tools that enable the first steps of subversion, it seems natural to want to apply them to the institution we know best. Postmodernism, especially the work of Michel Foucault (see *Discipline*, and *Power*, chaps. 6, 7, 8), provides tools for examining power relationships and revealing inconsistencies in the application of power. The discovery of these inconsistencies, in turn, places the authority of institutions or individuals in question. Mormonism, on the other hand, offers another way of characterizing the same problem. Any time we disagree with a decision made by someone who has authority over us, we can simply claim "unrighteous dominion" (D&C 121:39) and place the individual's authority in question. The fusion of both kinds of critique in the Mormon intellectual can lead to personal disaster for the intellectual.

The father of the critique of arbitrary power in institutions and individuals is not Nietzsche or Marx or your favorite postmodernist. It is Machiavelli. In *The Prince*, he argues that the primary purpose of authority is to maintain power. He focuses on offering practical advice to individual leaders that will enable them to gain and then maintain power, implying that the vitality of institutions depends on the ruthless exercise of arbitrary power by rulers. That such ruthlessness transcends both ideal and practical notions of justice is central to Machiavelli's thesis. Since Machiavelli's time, critiques of power relationships have typically focused on the discrepancy between just rule and ruthless exercise of arbitrary power in institutions–families, businesses, churches, schools, and government.

More current approaches have taken another step. They have become more Machiavellian. They tend to see all power as exclusively arbitrary and, therefore, also to see institutions as automatic hindrances to individual freedom. Mormon intellectuals, uncritically accepting the current fashion, may fall into the trap of believing that the fundamental attribute of power relationships in all institutions is injustice because all power relationships are unequal. Suddenly, a temple recommend interview shifts from a relatively benign relationship with a temporarily designated priesthood leader to the institutional church's desire to maintain unjust control over one private devotional life. That is a big shift of perception. Too big, if you ask me. And it is very hazardous.

As I mentioned earlier, the critique of power in the minds of dissidents is designed to subvert and undermine the institution they attack. And that is because institutions can supposedly maintain their wealth and power only by virtue of injustice and ruthlessness. Well, that causes real problems for Mormon writers who subscribe, to one degree or another, to this approach.

I'll bluntly explain why. The approach makes it next to impossible to judge the motives of Church leaders in any of their roles. If the Church has wealth or exercises authority, the method urges us to believe that the wealth must have been accrued unrighteously and that the dominion associated with the exercise of authority must be unrighteous. But that critique is not about to change or reform the institution. It can only attempt to subvert, undermine, oppose, or destroy it. And that will never happen. Because God has made specific promises regarding the survival of the Church and its leaders, the prophets, all attempts at subverting the institution are doomed. That means that the Church as an institution and its institutional goals can hardly be affected by the critique of power and authority. The same holds true even for a more lukewarm reformism that seeks only to change "what's wrong with the institution."[6] Because the Church has proper authority, it polices itself without the need for reform or subversion.[7]

What can be affected by the adoption of such a stance, however, are the blessings associated with Church membership for the individual writer. For an intellectual to be disciplined by the Church for writing or to write himself out of the Church may seem to some to be compelling evidence that the Church is just another telestial institution, plainly susceptible to a Machiavellian critique. But we should all hesitate to go that far. We should rein ourselves in, pull up, and stop short.

In these matters, especially, I worry much more about the critic than the kingdom because the writer has so much more to lose. To be a serious Mormon is to believe in the undeniable benefits of temple attendance, wearing garments, paying tithing, partaking of the sacrament, praying in church, and having a calling in the ward. Buying too readily and too much into the critique of power and authority places all these blessings in jeopardy, either through disaffection and apostasy or through Church discipline. Of course, some of us may only go part of the way. There the consequences may be less devastating and only limit our effectiveness in a calling or keep us from serving where we could have. But that is still far too high a price to pay just to adhere to the tenets of a critical ideology–a product as much of intellectual fashion as of rational viability.

THE MORMON WRITER AS ADVOCATE

Having said just enough to risk being labeled an anti-intellectual for the rest of my life, I now proceed to the even more difficult part of my remarks. I speak of the reverse of subversion, advocacy. If there are areas of subversion Mormon writers should avoid, are there areas of advocacy to which Mormon writers should aspire? My answer, without reservation, is a resounding yes. In response to my introductory impressions, I have some suggestions of themes Mormon writers can continue to advocate.

First and foremost, I follow Susan Howe in strongly urging Mormon writers to eschew violence. There is more than enough violence in popular as well as serious art, literature, and music. The overwhelming amount of violence directed specifically against women rends the fabric of all societies. Mormons have no need to capitalize on it, no matter how great the praise they receive or how large the profits. I will say no more about this theme but urge us all to review Susan's powerful presidential address on the subject.

Second, I urge that our literature "renounce war and proclaim peace" (D&C 98:16). As true followers of the Prince of Peace, we owe it to the world to turn away from war and its glorification through art and to present true alternatives. And the gospel provides many alternatives to the terror and mass destruction common to war prophesied by Joseph Smith in section 87 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 45, for example, prophesies of times and places where God will protect the Saints. Our literature should reflect deep faith in that promise.

Mormons have had significant experience with marginality and exile. I would hope that our art reflects what it means to be downtrodden and how the gospel of Christ provides hope through the charity of true disciples. Our model for such stories–remember all art is rhetorical–is found in Jesus' own parables where the poor, the sick, the feeble, and the sinner find solace as they place their faith in God, who worries about every lost sheep or coin until it is found. We learn to celebrate the homecoming of every prodigal son or daughter, no matter how far they may have strayed, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). Some may say that this theme has become trite, that we've told every tale there is to be told about the homecoming of the repentant sinner. I suspect that much skill exists, perhaps in this room, ready to help us all understand deeper and better the powerful truth of the return from sin. But we need to remember that, for the sinner, joy is not found on the road to prodigality so much as it waits for us with "God, who is our home" (Wordsworth, l. 65).

Marginality and exile should also remind us of Zion, a center place, where there will be no marginality and no exile. The gospel promises Zion through consecration, and glimpses of it are ever present with the Saints. We witness it in Utah as families consecrate sons or daughters to the work of the Lord. With tears of fear and joy, we are cut off from them as the MTC doors close. But on the other side of the world, doors open in Russia or Zimbabwe, and the promise of the gospel is brought to pass through acts of consecration for the common good of all Heavenly Father's children. Zion is a great theme of the gospel and as yet vastly untapped by Mormon artists.

Our literature should strive to strengthen faith in Christ. It should reflect and present the common experiences of the faithful. Spiritual gifts and promptings should populate our stories. And we should always be looking for new ways to tell of the infinite mercy and grace of our Savior. Those stories will not all be the same. Ever greater skill and craft will find ways to reveal miracles in great variety the world over, in every language and in every culture.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of all, however, is to find ways in which the doctrines of the gospel may distill upon our art, as the dews from heaven. The Fall. The Resurrection. Agency. Living prophets. Eternal marriage. The unity of the family after death. Eternal life. These truths will lift our literature to greater heights. Not, of course, without much failure, much sentimentality, even much confusion. But that is to be expected. We will have poorly written blockbusters that make the best-seller lists. But we will also have more work like that praised today.

Such art will not be bland, but it will also not shock—at least not in the way some believe art must shock us out of bourgeois numbness. Instead, it will gently surprise us as its sweet truth unfolds in unsuspected places. It will gradually grow on us, as the gentle experience of the beautiful Danish film, *Babette's Feast*. It will not attack us with the spiritually numbing gore and violence of *Goodfellas* or *Pulp Fiction*. It will invite us to change, to repent. And many will want to accept the invitation.

I conclude, then, by suggesting that the best Mormon literature will advocate, persuade, and invite rather than subvert, shock, and destroy. Mormon literature will seek to edify as it seeks to transform its audience.[8] Somewhere in great Mormon literature we will find true power and authority, not just the intellectual authority of the scribes, for true disciples of Christ have always carried with them power and authority sufficient to save. We should all be grateful that they do. Thank you.

NEAL W. KRAMER is Assistant Dean of General Education and Honors at Brigham Young University. He has previously taught or been an administrator at Ricks College, Illinois Institute of Technology, and the University of Chicago. He is the author of numerous articles and reviews on Mormon literature and culture. He also serves as trustee-at-large for the Inner City Youth Charitable Foundation. He and his wife, Leila Gates Kramer, are the parents of five daughters. This paper was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

NOTES

1. For a clear and careful explanation of the master/slave relation, see Kojeve chap. 1; Hegel, chap. 4, sec. 1; and Nietzsche's slightly different conclusion in his analysis of Christian morality as slave morality. Much of Marx's work in *Capital* relies on an interpretation of Hegel that allows him to understand laborers as slaves to their masters, the owners of the means of production.

2. For Mormon intellectuals the issue of submissiveness to higher authority is of paramount importance. Elder Henry B. Eyring makes this point powerfully and well in his talk, "Faith, Authority, and Scholarship," which was first presented as part of the Discipline and Discipleship lecture series sponsored by the BYU Honors Program.

3. Kristeva draws on the experience of Soviet dissidents like Andrei Sakharov to urge subversion of Western institutions. She seems to believe that Soviet abuse of power is no different in principle from uses of power in the West. The comparison strikes me as too facile.

4. This is emphatically not to say that Mormonism ought to celebrate mediocrity. All popular culture, Mormon or not, has a kind of centrifugal force that urges mediocrity. We need look no further than movies, television, and popular music to see that their mediocrity pulls anyone with high ideals down. Why should we desire to be entertained by the trivial and insipid world of most American (and Mormon) popular culture?

5. We fantasize that our work will somehow be made into a movie, a blockbuster: "The most beautiful, ethically pure, and politically correct stars will want to play us. If Redford knew me, he'd surely want to play me. And then everyone would understand how wonderfully subversive I am."

6. Even reformism has a history. In many cases, the desire for reform ultimately results in the proliferation of sects. The history of Mormonism is replete with reformers who ultimately have broken away from the institution and started eccentric little groups. Almost all have accused duly authorized priesthood leaders with some kind of abuse of power. In a sense, the absence of vitality in any of the groups bespeaks the weakness of their critiques vis à vis the Church.

7. The promises are clear. One need look no further than the Ninth Article of Faith to find appropriate justification for the statement. Nevertheless, President Wilford Woodruff said it most clearly at the time the Manifesto was ratified by the Church: "The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty." Sixty-first Semi-annual General Conference of the Church, Monday, 6 Oct. 1890, *Deseret Evening News*, 11 October 1890, 2; included in "Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff Regarding the Manifesto," D&C, 1981 ed., 292, immediately following Official Declaration—1. Careful study of the history of the Church verifies President Woodruff's statement.

8. "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness." D&C 50:22-23.

WORKS CITED

Andersen, Kurt. "The Talk of the Town: The Creative Life." *New Yorker*, Oct. 6, 1997, 48.

Clark, Gregory. "Writing as Travel, or Rhetoric on the Road." CCC 49.1 (Feb. 1998), 9-23.

Eyring, Henry B. "Faith, Authority, and Scholarship." In *On Becoming A Disciple-Scholar*. Ed.

Henry B. Eyring. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995. 59-71.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Trans. by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

---. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Hegel, G. W. F. *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977.

Howe, Susan Elizabeth. "The Moral Imagination." *AML Annual* 1996. 1-6.

Kojeve, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel.* New York: Basic Books, 1969.

Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader.* Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Seán Hand. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince.* Trans. Harvey Mansfield, Jr. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy.* Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: Random House, 1906.

Nietzche, Friedrich. "On the Natural History of Morals." *Beyond Good and Evil,* pt. 5. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1973, 1990.

Solzhenitsyn, Alexandr I. *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation I-II, III-IV, V-VI.* Trans. Thomas P. Whitney. New York: Harper and Row, 1972, 1974, 1976.

Wordsworth, William. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."

The Viper on the Hearth

INTRODUCTION

ERIC ELIASON: Good afternoon. I would like to welcome you all to the panel discussion "Mormon Literary Studies Goes Big Time: Oxford University Press's *Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths and the Construction of Heresy.*

Viper on the Hearth, in its examination of the political and theological workings behind the sensational and voluminous anti-Mormon literature of the 19th century is, I believe, the most significant book in LDS literary studies to come out this year and is already being counted as among the most important Mormon studies scholarly works of the 1990s.

Those of us in the Association for Mormon Letters may have overlooked this book as being relevant to our interests. It is, after all, about anti-Mormon literature. Some of us have learned to value the 19-century anti-Mormon classics for their entertainment value, but we have enough trouble getting people take works by Mormons seriously to worry about the literary importance of books such as *In the Toils: or, The Martyrs of the Latter Days, Mormon Wives: Narratives of Facts Stranger than Fiction, Elder Northfield's Home; or, Sacrificed on the Mormon Altar* and *The Fate of Madam La Tour: A Tale of the Great Salt Lake.* While much of this literature is simply laughable, some of it is downright disturbing even by the violent standards of some of today's literary trends.

In a passage typical of the genre, one novelist described the standard punishment for women who questioned polygamy:

> [She] was taken one night when she stepped out for water, gagged, carried a mile into the woods, stripped nude, tied to a tree, and scourged till the blood ran from her wounds to the ground, in which condition she was left till the next night. (Ward, 237)

Leaving no sin outside the pale of Mormon debauchery, another writer (in this case an ex-Mormon who should know better) claimed in reference to polygamy that "incest, murder, suicide, mania, and bestiality" are the chief "beauties" of this system" (Young, 321). In anti-Mormon literature, one gets little sense that much else went on in Utah but the aforementioned activities. Anti-Mormon authors went beyond yellow journalism in the ridiculous, even pornographic, extremes of their fabrications.

Anti-Mormonism is epiphenominal to the Mormon experience and wholly dependent on our continued existence for its continued existence. As a tick on the body of the Church, so to speak, it ought to arouse at least a medical curiosity in us. As scholars increasingly talk about Mormonism as the Western hemisphere's first and, as yet only, contribution to the number of world religious traditions found on earth, we should look at anti-Mormonism likewise as America's own home-grown bigotry that has taken its place alongside the great prejudices of the world. We should be interested in it in the same ways and for the same reasons that Jews have had an abiding interest in anti-Semitism. Curiously, Anti-Mormon literature certainly falls within the oft-cited definition of LDS literature as oral and written artistic texts that are by, for, or about Mormons.

If the Association for Mormon Letters is on a grail quest, and I think we are, it is for the great Mormon novel that is fully engaged with cutting-edge trends in the highest circles of literary writing and eminently worthy of praise by the most sophisticated and careful of literary critics yet at the same time presenting a recognizable portrait of the Mormon experience that encourages Latter-day Saints to be the best Saints they can be in a language that even the most "mainstream" of us would understand and appreciate.

Viper on the Hearth is new historicist in its serious treatment of popular literatures and its use of social history to understand literary texts. *Viper on the Hearth* is fully engaged with contemporary literary theory. It is published by Oxford University Press, which if I am correct, is only the second time this press has published a Mormon book. (The first was Philip Barlow's *Mormons and the Bible.*) Yet the book also quotes Mormon apologists such as Hugh Nibley and Truman Madsen to make its point that Mormons were persecuted not because they were a deviation from orthodox Christianity but because their radical orthodoxy exposed the whited sepulcher of 19th century American Protestantism. The author performs this meshing of academic styles if not always seamlessly, then always impressively.

Viper on the Hearth is the best example so far of the kind of "Mormo-American" criticism that Mike Austin called for here at AML a few years ago in his much-remembered manifesto. The Mormon experience cries out for scholarly attention simply because it is there--an important part of America's national experience. We don't need to justify scholarly attention to Mormonism because of our marginalization, misrepresentation, and the suppression of our rights even though we could. (*Viper on the Hearth* certainly points to a lot of examples. And if we have time I hope to comment on American imperialism in Utah and Mormon literature as the post-colonial literature of a people with quashed, but still latent, national aspirations.) There is no hand-wringing about the doctrinal or cultural legitimacy of the gospel in *Viper on the Hearth*, and yet there is also no embarrassingly naive self-righteous trumpeting either. *Viper* is simply confident competent scholarship which takes Mormon peoplehood and the claims of the Restoration seriously and exposes the system of wickedness behind the self-serving misrepresentations of popular 19th century anti-Mormon writers.

Assembled here today is a panel of scholars for whom *Viper on the Hearth* has been important to their work in various ways. Each will give a brief assessment of the book; then we will turn the time over to questions from the audience and discussion among the panelists. I have tried to get panelists from a variety of perspectives for this session and imagine, and hope, we will hear some varied opinions. Some panelists will be familiar to you; others come to Mormon literature from other fields.

Neal Kramer needs no introduction to many of you. He is assistant dean of honors education at BYU and the current president of the Association for Mormon Letters. He recently wrote a review of *Viper on the Hearth* published in the FARMS *Review of Books*.

Richard Ouellette is a graduate student of history at the University of Texas at Austin. Ironically, his emphasis shifted from the civil rights movement to Mormon studies after leaving Salt Lake City for Austin, Texas which is the home of the Lyndon Baines Johnson

Library and archives. He recently completed a survey of recent developments in Mormon studies to be published in the *Religious Studies Review* in which *Viper on the Hearth* figures prominently.

Jana K. Riess is a graduate student in religious studies at Columbia University. She recently won the Mormon History Association's award for best paper given by a graduate student. She is now working on a dissertation that examines the anti-Mormon rhetoric used by Protestant women missionaries in Utah and the counter-rhetoric employed by Mormon women in defense of their marriage and religious practices.

Terryl Givens's connection to *Viper on the Hearth* is particularly intimate since he is its author. He teaches English at the University of Richmond. We are indeed privileged to have him here with us today to set us straight on any possible misreadings we may make of his text. We will give him the last word on *Viper on the Hearth* before we go into questions and answers.

NEAL W. KRAMER: The most important contribution of *The Viper on the Hearth* is to demystify the rhetoric of heresy, the collection of literary genres and modes of reporting used to characterize Mormons as radically different from other Americans. Givens locates the source of heresy in conflicting choices, "with competing, and mutually exclusive, options. Heresy is the choice that loses" (77). For there to be heresy, there must also be orthodoxy. While Givens never says so directly, the implication of his work is that American orthodoxy is mainline Protestant. Mormonism's heresy, therefore, lies in its rejection of the basic tenet of Protestantism: reformation.

> Unlike the reformers who preceded him, Joseph Smith insisted that his role was to usher in a new dispensation, a full restoration of Christianity in its pristine purity. He proclaimed the apostasy from authentic Christianity complete, the apostolic succession long broken, and authority to act in God's name completely removed from the earth. A reinauguration, not merely a reformation, of Christianity was called for. New scriptures and new doctrines rapidly followed, effecting further differentiation from contemporary Christian faiths. (61)

Joseph Smith's announcement that this was not a mere reformation was also his announcement that traditional Protestantism was inadequate for salvation. The Book of Mormon is even more direct. "Behold, there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth" (1 Ne. 14:10). Protestants had early recognized the Roman Catholic church as this whore. Mormons, however, were teaching that God told Joseph Smith that "all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt" (Joseph Smith—H 1:19). And Joseph had asked specifically about Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. This Mormon announcement of the essential inadequacy of reformation necessarily initiates an inquisition.

For Givens, heresy "marks the limits of religious freedom which any one particular community will tolerate" (77). The limits of religious freedom for Protestants willing to tolerate other Protestants found definition in the existence of Catholicism on the one hand and Mormonism on the other. "By general nineteenth-century consensus, Mormonism was self-evidently beyond the pale of mere difference, a fit candidate for the label of heresy" (77). For Protestants, toleration has often meant recognizing a new sect as appropriately Christian. Appropriately Christian typically means a willingness to recognize the spiritual efficacy of Protestantism. Therefore, a sect which denies the spiritual efficacy of Protestantism is intolerable. While Mormons claim to be the one true church, they allow all people the privilege of worshiping as they choose, under whatever name they choose. Nineteenth-century Americans were not so generous.

Givens suggests a number of ways in which Mormonism crosses the line between the barely tolerable and the heretical. One of the most interesting is the idea that Mormonism amounts to "a rehistoricizing of Christianity" (85). The problem with Mormonism is not a particular doctrine so much as the announcement that God speaks to real people in the here and now. For Givens, "religions seem to carry out as part of their own self-conceiving the means of obscuring seminal moments of their history, thereby creating an opening for the divine, the transcended, the eternal, to intervene and create the rupture with historical reality that is the root of the sense of the sacred" (88). Thus the sacred and the mysterious are combined into a distantly holy other world. The creation of sacred distance protects the believer from the possible mockery of the simplicity or even the vulgarity of everyday beliefs. It creates a rhetorical space for allegory instead of history.

Such sacred distance, of course, begs the question of the historical origins of religion. Mormonism transgresses the boundary between the sacred and the historical from its earliest beginnings.

> Smith's unrelenting anthropomorphizing; the chronological and geographical specificity of his encounters with the divine; his commitment of heavenly revelation to the process of transcription, publication, and marketing; his enactment of prophetic restoration through the medium of legal incorporation—these and related aspects of Smith's work rendered religious allegorizing of his message impossible. (90)

Joseph Smith stubbornly insisted that he had seen visions and that they happened in real time and real space. They were historical. "The fullest implications of the 'heresy' were not unfolded until the spring of his last year, at which point he was publicly teaching that God himself 'was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!'" (92). Givens urges us to see "Mormonism's radicalism"

> as its refusal to endow its own origins with mythic transcendence, while endowing those origins with universal import since they represent the implementation of the fullest gospel dispensation ever. The *effect* of this unflinching primitivism, its resurrection of original structures and practices, is nothing short of the demystification of Christianity itself. For Mormonism replicates the process of canon formation, prophetic utterance, communion with supernatural entities—all this *without* the veil of intervening history, mythic origins, or tradition. The church is reintegrated into the ongoing flow of human history, origins are concrete and proximate, the process of doctrinal formation is laid bare. (83)

Mormonism is heretical because it testifies that encounters with the divine are as real as a trip to the woods or the grocery store. And that claim threatens to delegitimize the transcendental mystery of traditional Christianity.

The rhetoric of heresy persists even today as Protestants charge that Mormons are not Christians. Perhaps the most common form of the charge is that the church is not church at all; rather, it is a "cult." Givens notes that "some four hundred 'anti-cult' groups are currently aimed specifically at Mormonism" (80). But such persistent insistence on the church's cult status arises from anxiety that Mormon heresy may in fact be true. And if Mormonism is truly Christian, that fact casts considerable doubt on similar claims made by traditional Christians. Givens defines two very contradictory ways in which Mormonism may be taken to be Christian. "Mormonism's controversial status as a Christian sect may depend whether 'Christian' is taken to refer to a historical tradition or a mode of Jesus-centered discipleship, however idiosyncratic its articulation" (81).

The "historical tradition" definition arises out of the uneasy relationship between Protestants and Catholics. Protestants rely on the continuity from Catholicism to legitimize their claims to be Christian. But from the very beginnings of the Reformation, Protestants have had no qualms about calling the Pope Antichrist. There is no stronger claim that any church is not Christian than that. Mormon claims of origin, however, deny the need for the historical tradition. In fact, the historical tradition for Mormons translates into "the great apostasy." Rather than charge Mormons with having perverted the tradition, as had the Catholics, Protestants charge that Mormons have simply denied the tradition—a charge which Mormons, as Givens remarks, do not deny. As Orson Pratt taught, a fundamental tenet of the tradition required ministers to teach their congregation that "they were not to believe anything except it was found in their ancient books" (81).

Mormons prefer to define Christianity independently of any apostate tradition. They therefore opt for a definition closer to Givens's "mode of Jesus-centered discipleship." That leaves rhetorical room for tolerance of all claims to worship Christ on the one hand and for the claim that Mormonism is exclusively true on the other. But it also means that Mormons have typically had little interest in making any accommodation toward either Protestants or Catholics. In addition, because Mormons have chosen the second definition, they are dismayed at the orthodox charge. "Mormons . . . officially and personally find the accusation repugnant, erroneous, and hurtful" (81). Givens, however, is a bit confused by the response. "For Mormons to insist on their Christianity, given that label's evolution as a historically conditioned category of belief and practice, is to minimize Mormonism's innovations and to subvert its own insistence that restoration rather than mere reformation was necessary" (81). Givens's explanation seems like a perfectly reasonable response to the dilemma, unless one is unwilling to discount the ongoing propaganda value of the original charge. Then it becomes much more than a simple intellectual disagreement. It becomes a question of who will be saved and who will not, a point which Givens seems to be making everywhere else in the book.

The Viper on the Hearth is an important new contribution to the study of Mormonism and its detractors. Its great strength lies in its ability to refocus our attention on Mormonism as a religion rather than as a social movement, a political dilemma, or a peculiar economic system. Not since Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984) or Lawrence Foster's *Religion and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford UP, 1981) has Mormonism been taken so seriously as a religion by scholars. If Mormonism can be taken seriously as a religion, then anti-Mormonism must be seen for what it is: cruel and repugnant intolerance, masquerading as overzealous patriotism or moral crusading (Kramer, 62-66).

RICHARD OUELLETTE: Let me begin by saying that I love this book. Readers will be richly rewarded, for the book provides terrific insights into a number of provocative subjects. Two things in particular impress me. First, the book possesses a subtle yet powerful moral clarity about the ways in which religious minorities are misrepresented and victimized, the Mormons more so than any other American group. Secondly, I'm astounded by the succinctness of the text. Each page is packed with shrewd observations. I expect to come back and mine this book for insights again and again.

Being a historian of American religion in training, I would like to focus on what I see as some of the contributions and potential problem areas of this book in terms of history and religious studies. The first area I would like to discuss is its analysis of concepts like *orthodoxy* and *heresy*. Givens skillfully shows how the meanings of these concepts are anything but static and given. On the contrary, their meanings are worked out, debated, and "constructed"--and not only by the believers within a tradition, but also by those outside the tradition, particularly by its opponents. Only with the passage of time, once the disputes that shaped a religion have subsided, do the meanings of *orthodoxy* and *heresy* seem self-evident.

In my experience, this is a hard concept for believers to accept—at least regarding their own particular tradition. One year ago, Eric Eliason and I helped teach a course at the University of Texas at Austin on the formation of religions, with particular emphasis on Mormonism. We tried to get the mostly non-Mormon class to grasp how unsettled Christian theology and canon were in the formative centuries of Christianity. Some of the students got it, but most of the Christian evangelicals in the class resisted the idea. For them, Christianity experienced none of the messiness evident in other religions, Mormonism in particular—theological change, fallible prophets, and scriptural development.

To be fair to those students, I think most Mormons are likewise reluctant to confront the messiness of their own religious past; indeed, most people who view their religion as something more than human pretention probably feel this way. My point in recounting this experience is that I think Givens's book could have helped these students understand what we were trying to convey, for he brings out the unsettledness of early Christianity without discounting the supernatural experiences that were at the heart of the movement.

Another important contribution of the book is its focus on religious difference as a cause of Mormon persecution. Historians have usually pointed to the Saints' political, economic, or social behavior rather than religious beliefs as the source of gentile animosity. Givens, however, argues that the one consistent catalyst of anti-Mormon hostility from 1830 to the present has been the Saints' belief in modern revelation, modern prophets, spiritual gifts, and canon development.

To provide a point of comparison with Givens's conclusion, I've recently read Craig Foster's 1989 BYU thesis, "Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837-1860," as well as an assortment of nineteenth-century anti-Mormon pamphlets by members of the Reorganized Church. The RLDS pamphlets seem to corroborate Givens's thesis. While alarmed by the social impact of polygamy and theocracy on the Latter-day Saints and the nation as a whole, they focused more often than not on religious matters, namely, the perceived LDS distortion of Mormon scripture and history. Most of these pamphlets appealed to scripture and early Mormon history to refute LDS beliefs about plural marriage, leadership succession, and other religious issues.

British anti-Mormons, by contrast, devoted less attention to LDS religious matters, but a substantial amount nonetheless. Foster finds, for instance, that British anti-Mormons devoted more attention to what they considered to be the fraudulent nature of the Book of

Mormon than their American counterparts. He concludes that British pamphleteers would have devoted even more attention to such religious matters had they thought that their working-class readers were more interested in such issues.

While Givens's focus on the religious deviance of the Saints provides a necessary counterbalance to previous historiographic explanations of Mormon persecution, his argument could be taken too far. The Reorganized Church is a case in point: The RLDS rejected polygamy, theocracy, communitarianism, and the more radical aspects of Joseph Smith's theology. Nevertheless, they continued to affirm the basic religious tenets that Givens emphasizes as a cause of non-Mormon hostility--modern revelation, modern prophets, spiritual gifts, and canon development.

In contrast to the Utah Mormons, however, the Reorganized Church encountered little hostility. Nineteenth-century Iowa historians, for instance, described their RLDS neighbors as upstanding citizens and paid no attention whatsoever to the distinctive religious beliefs they shared with Utah Mormons--beliefs that Givens believes were fundamental, if not always decisive, to anti-Mormon hostility (Morain). Of course, it could be argued that the LDS received the animosity that would have otherwise been directed towards the RLDS if the LDS Church had not existed or had been more moderate. It could also be argued that the RLDS held such a Protestant attitude towards the written canon (greatly emphasizing it over the living prophet), and were so insistent that true revelation would never contravene conventional social attitudes, as to essentially nullify the scandal of modern revelation. At the very least, however, we should keep the case of the RLDS in mind when assessing the relative weight of modern revelation as a catalyst for anti-Mormon hostility.

Continuing on, Givens appeals to Rudolf Otto's binary distinction between the sacred and the profane to make the argument that LDS claims to modern revelation offended American Christians because it removed the aura of mystery that made the supernatural beginnings of Christianity so remote, acceptable, and sacred. This provocative suggestion, like the foregoing on the causes of Mormon persecution, deserves further examination; Givens may really be onto something here. Robert Wilken published a book some time ago entitled *The Myth of Christian Beginnings* which chronicled the propensity of Christians to think of early Christianity as a period of purity and supernatural happenings utterly removed from normal, profane time. And American Protestants, the instigators of most anti-Mormonism, are, unlike Catholics, more inclined to believe in sacred times than places (Morgan), perhaps the most sacred time of all being the early Christian period (Davis).

Against this backdrop, the scandal of uneducated farmers with ridiculously ordinary names like Joe Smith claiming revelations on a par with the biblical prophets seems obvious. At the same time, however, a growing number of scholars are finding—contra Otto—that the sacred and the profane have been binary oppositions only in the minds of scholars, that in the religious lives of ordinary Christians, the sacred and profane are usually scrambled together (McDannell). Commercial tourism and religious pilgrimage, for instance, are more often intertwined than separated. Moreover, the explosive growth of Pentecostalism in this century suggests that American Protestants are much more inclined to blur the supernatural and the profane than Givens indicates. His argument would have been more convincing to me had he gone beyond Otto in his discussion.

Another point I would like to discuss is Givens's argument that anti-Mormons, whenever possible, cast their opposition in nonreligious terms to avoid appearing religiously intolerant and to avoid discrediting the supernatural sort of events at the root of Christianity. Anyone who has carefully watched the reception accorded the Branch Davidians and the Peoples Temple knows that anti-cultists and the mass media portray such movements in terms of madness, coercion, and criminal activity—anything but genuine religious vision and commitment. Givens does a wonderful job showing that such was the case with the Mormons in the nineteenth-century, particularly when opponents were trying to justify violence or coercive legislation.

Foster's thesis likewise indicates that British anti-Mormons spoke of Mormonism in the coercive and orientalist themes that Givens describes. Even the RLDS, despite their focus on the religious claims of the Utah Mormons, often portrayed the Saints in secular terms of coercion and crime. RLDS representatives Zenas H. Gurley and E. L. Kelley presented a petition to Congress in 1882, for example, entitled *Polygamy a Crime—Not a Religion.*

Having said this, and being no expert on anti-Mormon literature, it is my impression that Mormon opponents never tired of attacking Joseph Smith's visionary experiences and the Book of Mormon--the very religious elements that, according to Givens, should have been avoided or attacked in nonreligious terms. I'm not sure if I understand Givens on this point: Is he claiming that anti-Mormons ignored these religious issues altogether, or that they were minor exceptions to the anti-Mormons' otherwise nonreligious focus, or that these issues were discussed in secular terms, or that they were ignored or secularized in anti-Mormon fiction, but not in anti-Mormon literature as a whole? This may be more of a problem with my own reading of the book; but whatever the case may be, I look forward to receiving clarification on this matter.

This leads me to my final point. Givens frequently refers to the contested nature of concepts like "orthodoxy" and "toleration," yet he assumes that the meaning of "religion" is fixed. His distinction between religious factors like revelation and nonreligious factors like LDS social, political, and economic practices assumes that religion is distinguishable from these other categories. But part of the Saints' dissent was their refusal to make such distinctions. Whether the primary cause of Mormon persecution was their belief in modern revelation (as Givens contends) or their social practices (the standard view), to the Saints the issue came down either way to religion. In this sense, Mormons and Americans were fighting over the definition of "religion"; and the American definition, with its comparatively sharp distinction between the sacred and secular, was simply another means of subduing the Mormons. "Religion," of course, is notoriously difficult to define, and I certainly did not expect Givens to resolve this dilemma or to use other than the standard American distinction between secular and sacred. Given Givens's keen analysis of concepts like orthodoxy, however, I'm disappointed that he did not grapple in a similar manner with the concept of "religion."

These quibbles aside, I expect *The Viper on the Hearth* to become a landmark in Mormon studies—and deservedly so.

JANA K. REISS: I suppose I should begin my comments today by saying that for Professor Givens, they will not come as a surprise. He already knows how I feel about his book. That's because, not five minutes after I finished reading the book for the first time last summer, I picked up the phone, tracked him down through his university's directory assistance, and left him a message on voice mail. I had never done anything like that before, just brazenly phoning an author out of the blue. I wanted to tell him how much I appreciated the insights of his book, *The Viper on the Hearth.* When he called me back a few days later, we had a very enjoyable conversation about the book, and I told him a bit about my dissertation-in-progress on Protestant women missionaries in Utah in the late nineteenth century.

So, let me tell you some of the reasons why this book has made such an outstanding contribution to the field. As a historian, I'm probably rotten company at an event like this because I rarely read anything outside of my field, certainly not such frivolous reading as fiction unless I am safely on vacation. But as a historian, I feel that Givens's book fills a real void in the field of Mormon history and illuminates the broader history of American religion in the nineteenth century. Mormon historians have concentrated on the Mormon side of history; and while this approach is certainly important, it tends to ignore broader connections between Mormonism and American culture. It is often an insular undertaking. Givens, however, is far more interested in the portrayal of Mormonism than in Mormon history, strictly defined. Often, he says, it is people's perceptions which determine the course of events. It is those perceptions—how Mormonism was constructed and subsequently opposed by outsiders—that are the concern of this book. Givens uses fiction as a lens to gauge the depth and nature of the anxieties of non-Mormon Americans in the nineteenth century. My comments will address this discussion of anti-Mormon fiction (mostly confined to the last third of Givens's book), raising a few points for kudos, clarification, or directions for further research.

First, Givens draws important literary connections between anti-Mormon literature of the nineteenth century and literature which excoriated other groups, especially Catholics. Similar tropes appear, such as the concern with libidinous sexuality or the fear of untempered ecclesiastical tyranny. Other scholars have noted this connection as well, including David Brion Davis in his classic article "Some Themes of Countersubversion," and also Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton in *The Mormon Graphic Image.*

The key point, as Givens raises many times, is to determine what identity Mormonism's detractors derived from presenting Mormons as heterocultural. Where Givens transcends these earlier studies is by not simply noting how novelists used the same rhetorical devices to castigate both groups but in exploring how Mormons resisted the ethnic stereotypes so easily heaped onto antebellum Catholics. Mormons were, as Givens tells us, only "quasi-ethnic." Part of American culture's discomfort about Mormons resulted from what anthropologists might term their "liminality." As Mary Douglas has demonstrated, "all margins are dangerous" (122). What is not easily codified, categorized, and therefore contained is often the source of tremendous social anxiety. Nineteenth-century Mormons occupied the dangerous interstices between American and un-American, Christian and apostate, civilized and heathen. They looked too much like their neighbors to be easily categorized.

With this discomfort in mind, I wish that Givens had paid more attention to the first of David Brion Davis's "subversive" groups: the Masons. The Masons, unlike most antebellum Catholics, were also an indigenous group, like most Mormons. Lacking obvious racial and ethnic markers, they blended more easily with their neighbors than immigrant or non-European groups. And yet they sparked a shocking controversy in antebellum America (culminating, not coincidentally, in Joseph Smith's home region in 1826), and were the objects of fear and loathing. There is something deeper to this comparison, and perhaps the new spate of historical work on Masonry will offer some insights into why interstitial groups like the Mormons and the Masons were seen as so dangerous.[1]

For me, one of Givens's most exciting arguments is his discussion of "Orientalism in the Extreme Occident," or the tendency to depict Mormons in the racial and cultural terms Westerners employed to exoticize Islam in the nineteenth century. The base similarities—prophetic leadership, new revelations, and of course polygamy—led many people to paint Mormonism as "the Islam of America." But what Givens observes is that any genuine parallels between the two religions are almost immaterial; the goal of such comparisons is to bring "into stark relief the un-American, un-Christian, un-Western nature of the Mormon religion" (132).

I'd like to add that it's not just in fiction that these Orientalist images abide. In the voluminous Protestant missionary literature from the nineteenth century, the association between Islam and Mormonism crops up time and time again, as a source of simultaneous fascination and horror. And in a pinch, any non-Western religion would do for comparison, even without the superficial similarities between Islam and Mormonism. One missionary proclaimed in 1881 that "the same methods by which Christianity has been carried into the jungles of India and the wilds of Africa will be required to carry and hold it in Utah. The citadel of polygamous Mormonism must be invested by a Christian army, as other strongholds of heathenism have been besieged" (qtd. in Haskell). In the missionary literatureb—especially in recruitment and fund-raising tracts—Utah was painted as an exotic, remote land, a foreign mission field that happened to be located on American soil.

This brings me to a passing observation about how nineteenth-century novelists depicted Mormon country as being so geographically and culturally remote from the rest of the American experience. Givens notes that some authors tried to capitalize on this physical and psychic distance even after the intercontinental railroad was completed through Utah, facilitating travel and exchange between East and West, by creating "lost" fictional Mormon communities out in the wilderness. I would add that another literary device is chronological regression. *The Fate of Madame LaTour*, for example, was written in the early 1880s, but Paddock chose to begin her story some forty years in the past. This strategy helps her to present Mormonism as untouchable by American civilization, accessible only by dangerous wagon treks across the plains. In several depictions of such treks, she is careful to delineate the perils of desert travel.

Such distancing also helps to avert another problem Givens so correctly observes: that conversion in anti-Mormon novels can never be portrayed as a conscious, informed choice (142). By situating their novels in the distant past, some later anti-Mormon novelists could keep their heroines innocent of any charges that they had chosen polygamy. In *Elder Northfield's Home*, Marion is already married to a Mormon and on the boat from Liverpool before she learns of the sad fate of women in Utah (and even then, she follows her husband there only on the explicit promise that he will never take another wife). Unknowing, she is thus absolved of all blame. In *The Fate of Madame LaTour*, polygamy is not a publicly acknowledged practice when the novel begins, so the female characters cannot be held responsible for extricating themselves from its clutches.

This observation brings me to a niggling criticism of *Viper in the Hearth*, which is that Givens places too much store in the fact that polygamy was not publicly acknowledged until 1852. This is of course true, but it does not follow from this that polygamy was entirely out of the picture as a reason for hating Mormons. Although Mormons denied charges that they were practicing polygamy all throughout the 1840s and the *Nauvoo Expositor* was destroyed to publicly prove their point, the fact that they were forced to deny such charges demonstrates that such rumors were rife. Rumors were flying about polygamy for almost a full decade before 1852. And as Givens himself tells us, rumor is "an active ingredient" in shaping public opinion (14).

The book is groundbreaking and deserves more attention than it has yet received. I think, however, that there is room for other scholars to build on Givens's scholarship, and to refine it here and there. One topic that I think deserves more conscious attention is gender. In Chapter 6 ("Ground in the Presbyterian Smut Machine"), Givens points to a number of elements which combined to give rise to anti-Mormon fictive success—changes in print media, the explosion of the penny press, etc. But he misses a key aspect of this revolution, and that is the new role of women as both consumers and producers of this new literature. Even a partial list of some of the authors Givens cites—Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Monk, Mary Martha Sherwood, Victorian Metta Fuller, Ann Radcliffe, Grace Kennedy, Maria Sedgwick, Cornelia Paddock, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Orvilla Beslisle, Jennie Switzer, Alfreda Bell, and so on— should give us a clue that *women* are helping to set the tone of this hegemonic discourse.

And for nineteenth-century women, this role was a very novel (no pun intended) and powerful one. Anti-whatever (insert your group here) novels were influential and political, as well as entertaining. Some of the women who wrote them enjoyed great prominence, like Stowe, or achieved a dubious notoriety, like Monk. In either case, their literary efforts made them household names.[2]

More concentration on women writers might point us in some interesting directions for determining the nature of these "fictive anxieties" that Givens has brought to our attention. One thing I am discovering in my own research is that the concerns of male and female anti-Mormon novelists sometimes diverged at key points. Both men and women were dismayed at polygamy and determined to abolish it by any means necessary. Yet the novels written by women—and this is a high percentage of all of the anti-Mormon literature—often reveal a slightly different emphasis. Mormon women in these novels are sexual slaves, revealing a deep-seated fear on the part of the Victorian women authors who peered through the curtains of the seraglio. The endurance of this fear demonstrates the precarious nature of female sexuality in the Victorian era.

It is especially interesting to contrast the depiction of sexuality in women's fiction with men's of the same period. In one humorous sketch by Ring Jepson (1879), a Wall Street broker dispenses some friendly advice to a colleague who is embarking on a trip to Utah:

> But I say, D'Orsay, you must be very careful while you are in Salt Lake, or some of those numerous young female Mormons will exercise their seductive charms upon you, and, like the Syrens of old, draw you into their ruthless grasp. I have heard it stated as fact

> that the streets of Salt Lake City are filled with gushing young damsels, who watch all the hotels and board all the incoming trains, in the hopes of catching and ensnaring unwary strangers, and then making proselytes of them. So you must be very careful.

In the novella, the two male characters then debate the wisdom of buying guns to protect themselves from the lurid Mormon women. In this scene, the sexual tables are turned: Mormon women have become the sexual predators, enticing innocent young men into the clutches of irreligion.

While Jepson's book is not representative of all anti-Mormon novels written by men, it does underscore a subtle difference of emphasis. Where women's fiction looked into the "harem" of polygamy and saw what they most feared, male writers sometimes viewed polygamy with an undercurrent of fantasy.

I am out of space, so let me leave you with this comment that, although I wish the book paid more explicit attention to gender issues, I have rarely been so enthralled by any work of history. I think that Professor Givens's book is exemplary in many ways, not the least of which being how he so successfully blends cultural history, literary criticism, and social theory. With engaging wit and economy of language, Givens has given (again, no pun intended) us all a great deal to think about.

TERRYL L. GIVENS: Some readers of my book have suggested that it broaches many subjects in the space of 200 pages—perhaps too many. That may well be. Once Oxford University Press showed strong interest in the project, perhaps I succumbed to the temptation to put a number of issues and concerns before an audience that would presumably extend beyond the Utah area. As one reader pointed out—it's not very often one hears the voice of Hugh Nibley or Truman Madsen coming from the product of a secular press. That alone gives me considerable satisfaction. Their voices and many others deserve to be heard in a larger setting than is typically the case.

Here in brief, then, are the questions I wanted to entertain. Using Mormonism as a test case, I wanted to analyze the role of literature in shaping prejudice, and I wanted to see how fictional representations might contribute to our understanding of the psychology of religious conflict. I have tried to introduce into the Mormon discussion—for the first time, I believe—some of the ways in which rules that govern public discourse and generic conventions can distort and reshape social strife. I have tried to draw attention to what I see as very disturbing parallels between the moral crusade against Mormonism and the well-intentioned but naive, uncritical, and dangerous efforts to delineate the features of "cults" in the aftermath of Waco and Heaven's Gate. Of most continuing interest to me, I have tried to apply recent critical models to reveal the highly artificial nature of categories like orthodoxy and heresy, while looking closely at the root causes of Mormonism's marginal status. And it is here, where this chapter on heresy raises a problem it does not resolve, that I would like to begin today.

Some years ago I was conversing with a colleague who from time to time expressed vehement hostility toward Mormonism. He was also a friend, so usually exerted himself to practice a reasonable degree of toleration and patience with my Mormon heresies. On this occasion, however, while discussing certain issues related to my work, he was visibly seething with irritation, and I could see he was going to have an embolism if he didn't vent, so I encouraged him to get it all off his chest.

Dropping all inhibitions he suddenly blurted out the question that encapsulated for him all that was disturbing and blasphemous about LDS doctrine. "Do you really believe," he demanded, "that in a million years, you will be creating worlds and populating them with your own posterity?!!"

"I will answer you if you answer a question first," I replied. "What do you propose to be doing one million years from now?"

"Growing in the grace of Christ!" he blurted out authoritatively.

"Not good enough," I replied. "I mean, at precisely eight o'clock on a Thursday morning, one million years from today, exactly what activity will you be engaged in?"

He sputtered for a minute or two, then all the air went out of his sails. Finally he admitted reluctantly: "I see your point. Any answer one might devise would sound equally absurd."

As I have tried to demonstrate in my book, it would seem that heresy, orthodoxy, and interaction between the two cannot be fruitfully studied if we simplistically equate religion with what is believed or taught or practiced. It wasn't the particular doctrine of eternal increase that really offended my good colleague as much as it was the nature of the claim being made, its concrete specificity, the intrusion of mortal patterns and concepts into the domain of sacred space. (Indeed, I believe an insightful study of the history of heresy would reveal in even starker terms this fact: that heresy is as much about language and discourse as it is about tenets and dogmas.) What a devout Christian will be doing one million years from now is no more a fit subject for theological disquisition among polite society than the kind of clothes angels wear (Joseph said they were seamless) (Cowdery, 79) or the mechanical process by which the mind of God becomes Holy Writ (peep stones and hats and all that).

Where is there room for sacred mystery, awe and reverence in the face of the ineffably divine, in all this? As Professor Kramer paraphrases my point in his review, "Mormonism is heretical because it testifies that encounters with the divine are as real as a trip to the woods or the grocery store. And that claim threatens to delegitimize the transcendental mystery of traditional Christianity."

Reading this—and it is an accurate paraphrase—I remembered an ironically similar characterization one greatly accomplished historian in the church made under different circumstances. He wrote to me protesting that my emphasis on the de-mystifying aspects of Joseph Smith's mission would have the critics laughing: "Oh yes, I have seen God, he looks like old man Jones down at the corner market." It seems to me this is a valid concern—and a pressing issue in a church where members already may be too prone to refer to the Savior of the world as a big brother and the dominant architectural mode is cinderblock gyms with a chapel attached.

At such a juncture, where one comes face to face with the competing demands of Mormon monism and materiality on the one hand, and, on the other, Rudolf Otto's claim that the ineffable mystery is the precondition for all religious experience, at least three options are present.

First, we can ignore the perils of a relentless anthropomorphizing of God and celebrate the absence of mystery and sublimity at the risk of giving further impetus to an already overly banal, over-commercialized culture. Theologian Edward Farley, lamenting what he calls typical "Sunday Morning" in old-line Protestant congregations, has this to say: "God is talked to and about, but minus the terrible mystery—a mystery which should set language atremble, silence facile chattiness, and scare us a bit" (5). In the mood of Sunday Morning, the seraphim would address God not as "holy, holy, holy" but "nice, nice, nice." Given such a stark dichotomy between the terrible and the pleasant, we can continue to opt for "nice."

Second, we can evade, obscure, or misread the literalism of Joseph Smith's discourse in order to recapture a little mystery and terror. There is great precedent for doing this when too many details begin to taint the divine with the concrete and the guardians fear a lapse from the sacred into the silly.

Listen, for example, to this astonishing piece of defensive revisionism that introduces the work of the great mystic Jacob Boehme. His editor Stephen Hobhouse quotes several authorities to establish beyond question Boehme's preeminence as "the greatest mystic produced by any of the Churches of the Reformation" (xi). Both William Law and Nicolas Berdyaev, for example, regarded Boehme as "one of the greatest mystics of all time" (xi). Yet another, W. R. Inge, calls his works "a mine, in which precious metal is embedded" (xii), and many other authorities are cited to similar effect. It is therefore fascinating to observe the facility with which the editor, so manifestly in awe of his subject, yet without any compunction whatsoever, blithely assumes the burden of protecting Boehme from himself:

> I have left out . . . subjects dealt with by Boehme . . . which are to us to-day [1949] so incredible and fantastic as to be out of place in serious reading; e.g., imaginary details of the life of the angels and of Adam in paradise, Adam's sexual nature, and the geography of Heaven and of Hell. These must, in my judgment, be described as "false" mythology without that symbolic value or relevance to reality possessed by all true "myths" (like those of Plato and Genesis). (xxii)

And a little later, he expresses the hope that his readers "will find a substantial residue of truth in the theology and psychology of this book, while enjoying the imaginative poetry and charm of such parts as they can only regard as pleasant mythology, quite divorced from reality" (xxix).

I could quote three or four otherwise excellent Mormon scholars who have done the same thing with Joseph Smith, referring to his highly metaphorical language, or drawing comparisons between his own reservations about the referential power of language and the language theory of Horace Bushnell, who believed language neither can nor should help us penetrate the veil of mystery surrounding the divine. And I see that a paper will be presented at the May MHA conference with the ominous title: "The Case for a Nonliteral 19th Century Mormonism."

Finally, there is a third response. One may choose to ask if it is now necessary, having effectively dismantled the sacred spaces of traditional Christianity, for Mormonism to rearticulate or reassert some of the old ones. I have only vague intimations of how this is to be accomplished. It may be art that contributes to a worthy and appropriate recasting of the category of the sacred. There is both promise and danger here, as William James reminds us. He observed that the human hunger for sublimity, or objects to which we can attach "adjectives of mystery and splendor," is such that we may in fact turn to art rather than religion to satisfy that appetite.

Equally pressing, of course, is the question of whether Edmund Burke was also right. In his *Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* he held that a vital constituent of sublimity is obfuscation. In the best example he could muster, from Milton, "all is dark, uncertain, confused, terrible and sublime *to the last degree*" (Burke pt. II, sec. iii, 45).

I would like to think that we can recuperate the sacred, in our art and in our theology and in our worship, by avoiding both banality and obfuscation. Surely there are other pathways to the sublime.

DISCUSSION

GIDEON BURTON: On the point about obfuscation and the divine, one of my best creative writing teachers said that the best way to sustain mystery was not to withhold details but to give more. From the seventeenth century to Alexander Pope, the task of writers was to create realistic descriptions of religious things, resulting in literary portraits of cannibals, demons, and various kinds of monsters that were realized in absolute detail. The literary theory was that imagination as inspiration could penetrate the veil and reveal the truth—not just secular knock-offs, but the real thing. Edmund Spenser, John Donne, George Herbert, Crashaw—their descriptions of the religious experience was as close to touching the real thing as possible. It excites the imagination. As a movement, this belief is connected to neo-Platonism and its claim that it is possible to rejuvenate the imagination and transcend the clichéd world of the spiritually banal.

DAVID RICHARDSON: How do you deal with the irony of the accusation on the part of Catholic and Protestant critics that Mormonism is guilty of heresy when it is actually catholics and Protestants that have departed from strict Biblicism?

TERRYL: Well, I'm sure I have something to offend everyone in this book, but I don't deal directly with that point. A professor of theology at Catholic University was uncomfortable with my using Rudolf Otto to represent Catholicism's view of the sacred and the profane. In this regard, I will quote from my book. In Emil Brunner's words, "God's revelation of himself always occurs in such a way as to manifest more deeply his inaccessibility to our thought and imagination. All that we can know is the world. God is not the world. . . . He is mystery." As Elizabeth Johnson writes:

> The history of theology is replete with this truth: recall Augustine's insight that if we have understood, then what we have understood is not God; Anselm's argument that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived; Hildegaard's vision of God's glory as living light that blinded her sight; Aquinas's working rule that we can know that God is and what God is not, but not what God is; Luther's stress on the hiddenness of God's glory in the shame of the cross; Simone Weil's conviction that there is nothing that resembles what she can conceive of when she says the word God; Sallie McFague's insistence on imaginative leaps into metaphor since no language about God is adequate and all of it is improper. (*Viper*, 82)

I think it is beyond dispute that the correspondence of the sacred with ineffability and mystery is a fair way to characterize the dominant Protestant and Catholic traditions of the West.

NEAL: That position, the ineffability and mysteriousness of the divine, causes serious philosophical problems for Christians in the current intellectual climate. Early in this century, the logical positivists wanted to develop a theory of knowledge and language based on the absolute correspondence between words and objects. As Wittgenstein struggled with his study of language, he seems to have come to a conclusion similar to the dominant traditions of Christianity. He and most other analytic philosophers have concluded that only figurative language offers us a way of thinking and knowing God. Most theologians agree with that position. Joseph Smith, however, does not need figurative language. God was real and was really seen. If that isn't heresy, nothing is.

ROBERT CHRISTMAS: I've always thought of this very point as s strength of the LDS theological position. Am I misreading what's happening now with the emphasis on the ways in which we're similar to other Christians? Or is there a watering down of the traditional Mormon theological position?

NEAL: One of the interesting things for me about the current stance is the way the early twentieth-century theologians have been excluded from the discussion—theologians like James E. Talmage and Orson F. Whitney and others. We have somehow decided to turn our backs on them. Works like *The Articles of Faith, The Great Apostasy, The Strength of the Mormon Position, Elias: An Epic of the Ages* emphasized the distinctness of Mormonism. Beautiful doctrines restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith (exaltation, the being and nature of God, Zion) and the power and authority of the priesthood were placed front and center so Mormons and non-Mormons could see the obvious differences between the true church and all others. There was little need to emphasize similarity, because the differences were simply more important. People needed to choose whether they wanted to be in or out. And that was that.

Perhaps it is important in an age of accommodation and tolerance to emphasize superficial similarities and agree to disagree about the fundamentals. I can see how that would be important. But sometimes it feels to me as if we've deemphasized fundamental differences in the name of political and cultural expediency. And I think that is our current approach, at least in our advertising and even in our proselyting.

I doubt that this approach threatens traditional theology, though. I think it is really a matter of rhetorical strategy, something Mormons are especially good at: emphasize the similarities so that we can get into more doors, then confront the potential convert with the differences once we're inside. If I understand the first discussion, the people we teach are almost immediately confronted with the First Vision and 1 Nephi 1, two fundamental texts that emphasize different and enjoin change. And I don't think we can ever move away from that.

ERIC: That sounds remarkably like some of the current anti-Mormon critiques being made of our proselyting strategies.

LEE ALLRED: Another dimension to the claim the Mormons for not Christians came up recently in Genie, a science fiction list. The non-Mormons started arguing among themselves. I had an immediate and very strong reaction to the claim that Mormons don't believe in Christ; and when another writer stepped in and asserted that Mormons do believe in Christ, my anger dissipated. I wasn't bothered by the other doctrinal and theological points they brought up, but it was intolerable to me to hear the claim that Mormons didn't believe in Christ.

ERIC: Considering the history and issues you bring up in your book, do you think Latter-day Saints have a special responsibility to speak up on behalf of even the most marginalized and unpopular religious groups-Branch Davidians, Moonies, Scientologists for example?

TERRYL: Yes, for three reasons. First, is our history. If we don't understand what it feels like to experience religious persecution, nobody does, and second, we have the moral authority to do so as one of the most persecuted religious minorities in American history.

Third, I was alarmed at the post-Waco

strategies for identifying cults, because it is disturbingly clear that these ad hoc identifiers reveal how malleable the category is and how easily that loaded term can be invoked to censor any group suddenly deemed socially unacceptable. In the aftermath of the Waco tragedy, for example, the Richmond paper published, by way of a "public service announcement," a set of keys for recognizing cults. The list is unblushing in its irony, apparent to any reader of the New Testament. Cultists will:

- preach the coming of the apocalypse
- attack churches and synagogues for false teachings
- proselytize new members
- make demands on members' time and money
- have a leader who claims to be a prophet
- require prayers, chants, speaking in tongues, etc. (*Viper*, 87)

Some have faulted my book for not acknowledging "an established body of scholarly literature on the subject of cults. Well, I think the definitive word on the subject was spoken by none other than Martin Marty, the most respected historian of religion in the nation. He was interviewed after Waco, and the first question was how he would define a cult. He said, "A cult is a church I don't like." Calling a religious movement a cult has no semiotic value but incalculable political force.

ERIC: You don't have to read very far in 19th Century anti-Mormon literature to realize many authors knew absolutely nothing about Mormonism, Utah geography, or any relevant details that would lend credence to their stories. In what we would today call the "true crime" books of the 19th century (and they were a lot more popular then than now) plots were recycled with fill-in-the-blank baddies. Chinese opium dens, Mormons, Turkish harems, Catholic convents—all these "evils" were portrayed in exactly the same way. All of them displayed every vice imaginable in full measure. How does this fact fit with what seems to be your contention that much anti-Mormonism resulted from a fairly sophisticated and scared reaction to the implications of LDS theological claims?

TERRYL: I'm not trying to reduce the causes of anti-Mormonism to the religious factors. Clearly, there are also very compelling realities at work, some of them generic and tied to public appetites. One of the most popular literary genres of the period is the convent thriller, descended from the Gothic novel invented by Horace Walpole. Some of the early anti-Mormon novels are clearly superimposed on the convent thriller form (like the awful disclosures of Maria Monk). Sometimes this is done so clumsily that the adaptation of an established form to a new pariah is clear.

ERIC: I teach folklore and watch the news with folklore in mind. Some of you may remember news coverage of a group of youth who broke into Saint Anne's retreat near Logan, Utah, and were abused by the night watchmen. The reason they were going to this retreat was that they had heard stories about nuns killing their illegitimate children there. For years youth have been vandalizing the place and scaring each other there. All of these anti-Catholic stories from 19th century pop culture and folklore are alive and well in youth culture today. The Catholic Church did own St. Anne's but it was a recreational facility and never a convent. That kids in the heart of Zion would believe ridiculous bigoted stories like this, so much like stories told against Mormons, shows that we are not immune ourselves from displaying the kind of ignorant bigotry others display against us.

NEAL: I think we've glossed over a point I'd like to come back to, and that is that the strongest revisionist strain recently in American histories of religions has been the exclusion of religion as the basis of religious persecution. It gets explained away as disagreements over economics or politics. The new historicism is employing methods that enable us to break away from those ideas. Religion does not have to be understood as the by-product of other, more basic, social forces. It can be understood as religion. That, I believe, requires us to take a look at the accounts of the past that have been rejected by the social scientist historians. We can now reread a text like Joseph Fielding Smith's *Essentials in Church History* and at least respect his sense that much of the primary opposition to the Church in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois may have been led by people who despised its doctrine. This resuscitation of the study of the negative and positive roles of religion could have tremendous implications. Since religion has for generations received little positive attention from departments of history, a book like *Viper* can help legitimize its study once again. Of course, that would mean that historians would have to move away from the exclusivity of their current methods and toward a broader understanding of how to read and interpret texts. Certainly some social historians are already moving in that direction.

JANA: *Viper on the Hearth* is *not* about Mormonism per se. I see it as an example of how groups utilize colonialist discourse to construct other groups as "other." Sadly for me, I see a bit of this very tendency in our discussion today, especially in the question about the "heresy" of Protestants and Catholics. I think we would do well to utilize the Givens book not only as a tool for understanding the Mormon past, but also as a case study of the larger issue of intolerance. We would also benefit from reading it as a warning of possible dangers, if Mormons continue to represent the theological beliefs of other groups in such unidimensional terms.

NEAL: The new Mormon history is the most insular version yet. There was little talk of Catholics or Protestants as "heretics"; there *was* discussion of how Protestant intolerance produces a rhetoric of heresy as it tries to eliminate the other. There is always a need, however, to avoid the kind of easy tolerance that would devalue being Mormon to something like being a Rotarian or a sorority sister. Sometimes it looks like the New Mormon History does just that in order to fit into the larger historiographical mainstream.

ERIC: I too have some problems with the New Mormon history and I think *Viper on the Hearth* is a good antidote to a lot of them. I wish we had more time to get into this discussion, but we are out of time. I would like to thank the panelists for their excellent analysis and the audience for their questions. This panel is adjourned.

NOTES

1. See especially Stephen R. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996). An excellent exploration of the cultural legacy of anti-Shakerism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is Elizabeth DeWolfe's Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1996.

2. Monk is probably not the best example, since she probably did not write the inflammatory account which bears her name. Monk's tale "was originally fabricated with the help of a little-known former priest named Hoyt and taken from Monk's dictation by a group of nativist and abolitionist men, adept at creating and projecting the sentimental voice of the captive Protestant heroine" (Franchot, 154; see also Billington; Wolffe).

WORKS CITED

Billington, Ray Allen. Introduction. *The Awful Disclosures of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal.* By Maria Monk.

Bunker, Gary L., and Davis Bitton. *The Mormon Graph-*

ic Image, 1834-1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.* London: Dodsley, 1757.

Cowdery, Oliver. "Letter IV." *Messenger and Advocate,* February 1835: 79.

Davis, David Brion. "Some Themes of Countersubversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature." David Brion Davis, ed. *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.

Davis, John. *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* New York: Routledge, 1966.

Farley, Edward. "Sunday Morning." *The Spire.* Summer 1997, 5.

Foster, Craig L. "Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain, 1837-1860." M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1989.

Franchot, Jennie. *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Protestantism.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

Givens, Terryl L. *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy.* New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

Gurley, Zenas H., and E. L. Kelley. *Polygamy a Crime---Not a Religion.* Washington, DC: n.p., 1882.

Haskell, D. C. "Mormonism: An Address." 8 June 1881. Sheldon Jackson Collection 161. Presbyterian Church (USA), Department of History and Records Management Services, Philadelphia.

Hobhouse, Stephen, ed. Hans L. Martensen. *Jacob Boehme: Studies in his Life and Teaching.* Trans. T. Rhys Evans. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949.

Kramer, Neal W. Rev. of *Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) by Terryl Givens, *FARMS Review of Books* 9.2 (1997): 62-66. Used by permission.

McDannell, Colleen. *Material Christianity: Popular Religion in America.* New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1995.

Morain, Thomas J. "Mormons and Nineteenth-Century Iowa Historians." *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 1 (1981): 34-42.

Morgan, David. *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1997.

Ward, Maria [pseud]. *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years Personal Experience by the Wife of a Mormon Elder Recently Returned from Utah.* New York, 1856.

Wilken, Robert L. *The Myth of Christian Beginnings.* Reprint ed. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1980.

Wolffe, John. "Anti-Catholicism and Evangelical Identity in Britain and the United States, 1830-1860." Eds. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk. *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 179-197.

Young, Ann Eliza. *Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage.* Hartford, CT, 1876.

PANEL PRESENTATION

The Works of Terry Tempest Williams

INTRODUCTION

JANA REMY (moderator/participant): Eugene England, a past president of AML, is an English professor at BYU (retired summer 1998). He is the editor of *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* and the co-editor of *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature.* He recently published a book of personal essays entitled *Making Peace.* Phillip Snyder received his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1988. He lives with his wife, LuAnn and their three children, Kathleen, Travis, and Jackson, in Salem, Utah. He teaches English at BYU and his publications include "From Walden Pond to the Great Salt Lake: Ecobiography and Engendered Species Acts in Walden and Refuge." Susan Howe was the 1995 AML president. She completed her Ph.D. in English and creative writing at the University of Denver. Her poems have appeared in the *New Yorker, Southwest Review, Prairie Schooner, Shenandoah,* and other journals, and she has been editor of *Exponent II,* managing editor of the *Denver Quarterly,* and the poetry editor of *Dialogue.* Scott Parkin is a science fiction writer. Jana Remy received her B.S. in Biological Science from the University of California, Irvine. She is active in the AML Internet List where she has been a weekly columnist and is now the Review Editor.

EUGENE ENGLAND: Since I regularly teach Terry's work in my classes, I thought it might be useful to report what that is like and see if it tells us anything about Mormon literature and about her as a Mormon writer. Though some of my Mormon students wonder if Terry is really a Mormon, she is. Many of us remember, at our gathering here six years ago, when she received the annual award in the essay for *Refuge,* how she asked to speak in response and told us, with obvious emotion, how much it meant to her to be honored, even accepted, by her own community.

Linda Brummett, a past AML president, tells how Terry worried a great deal about how the book would be accepted by her own people and how crucial that award was in allaying that fear. Linda also tells about hearing Terry read from *Refuge* when it first came out, to a national booksellers' convention, and how proud she was, as probably the only Mormon there, to have Terry identified as a Mormon. She felt, with the others there, Terry's respect for and identification with the Church and also her own spiritual power, which, Linda claims, had the audience bonded with her after only a few words. Linda has many friends among booksellers, most of whom have had Terry read at their stores, and she always finds their appreciation of Terry a strong common bond and a common ground for talk about the Church—and she says she feels fully content with what they have learned about Mormonism from Terry.

My students don't all feel that way. The first day after they have read *Refuge,* a few hands immediately go up with angry complaints about things they object to in the book, and this soon swells into a chorus. When this first happened, I immediately got defensive and then gradually got a few timid students to come to the book's defense, and the class turned into a debate about Terry's orthodoxy.

I recognized that this wasn't constructive, and the next time I taught *Refuge* I tried something that worked so well I now make it a part of my lesson plan. That time I happened to begin discussion of the book towards the end of the period; and before complaints started, I asked the students what they found "unorthodox" about Terry as a Mormon and wrote down on the board all their complaints, a list of all the unorthodox ideas and behaviors—which they contributed to enthusiastically. Then I asked them to go home and think about any ways she was a more orthodox Mormon than they were. At first, they laughed me to scorn, but then tried it and came up with a list the next day as long as the first one.

We could try that here if we had time, but let me summarize how my students think Terry is more unorthodox than most Mormons: She drinks champagne with her husband, goes to the lake instead of general conference (it's always interesting to have them think about why those rather superficial rule-breaking matters always come up first!), she decides not to have children, she prays to Mother in Heaven, in fact she "prays to the birds" (some English major always points out that that isn't really literal). Worst of all, Terry gives her mother a blessing. That one seems to arouse the most emotional objections. This can go on and on; the record is twenty specific ways Terry is an unorthodox Mormon.

The interesting thing is that each time, without much stretching, my students are able, after some reflection, to come up with a list just as long of ways Terry is more orthodox than the average Mormon: She loves her family passionately and sacrificially; she loves the earth and cares for it; she recognizes the spiritual creation that lies underneath all physical creation—animals, plants, and even rocks—and responds to it, calls out to it, tenderly ministers to it; she responds to the Lord's call to his Saints to "renounce war and proclaim peace"; she is willing, in fighting the evil of nuclear testing, which has killed so many of her family, to sacrifice time and spiritual energy but also to put her body on the line and be arrested at the Nevada test site; she is honest and open about her unorthodoxies, etc.

After we have made the lists, we talk about orthodoxy a bit, and I ask the students if they can see any way to generalize about the lists--and someone, after a bit, always points out that the list of Terry's unorthodoxies is mainly a list of rules, of commandments of performance like the law of Moses--and that most of the orthodoxies have to do with what Christ called "the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23). We ponder that awhile; and as you can imagine, almost all the students are able to go back, with more open hearts, for some more productive rereading, ready to be challenged and taught some new things about Mormon faith.

This has been a very useful exercise in getting us past a sterile debate over orthodoxy, especially since one class last year when a student, musing over that double list, asked the crucial question for Mormon literature: "Why is it that many of our best Mormon writers tend to be somewhat weak in the first list and strong in the second--that is, tend to be bad with the letter of the law and good with the spirit?" One of my students suggested that maybe it's because our good writers, being sensitive to Mormon pharisaism and judgmental finger-pointing, tend to break the rules a bit simply as a conscious rejection of pharisaical culture. I don't know if that's true, though I sometimes think Levi Peterson verges on such conscious rebelliousness--or claims he does, but the question is very important. And so is another question my students ask, for which I don't have an answer: Why don't we have more Mormon writers who are orthodox in all these ways—whom we can affirm for both lists—who, in Christ's words do the weightier matters and do not leave the other undone.

Terry came to BYU a few years ago, to visit my class and speak about her work and read from it to groups throughout the day. She ended by spending an hour talking individually with students who wanted her to autograph their copies of *Refuge*, in her unique way getting to know each student well enough to write each a very personal note. As I walked her to her car, I could tell she was exhausted and, when I noticed she was weeping, thought that was why. But she turned to me and said, "Gene, it must be a great privilege to teach here. I have never talked with students so spiritually clear." Terry Tempest Williams is a *Mormon* writer.

PHILLIP A. SNYDER:

> I have felt the pain that arises from a recognition of beauty, pain we hold when we remember what we are connected to and the delicacy of our relations. It is this tenderness born out of a connection to place that fuels my writing. Writing becomes an act of compassion toward life, the life we so often refuse to see because if we look too closely or feel too deeply, there may be no end to our suffering. But words empower us, move us beyond our suffering, and set us free. This is the sorcery of literature. We are healed by our stories. —Terry Tempest Williams, "Undressing the Bear," 57

For me, this passage invokes virtually everything embodied in the writing of Terry Tempest Williams--pain, recognition, beauty, memory, connection, delicacy, relation, tenderness, fuel, action, compassion, life, looking closely, feeling deeply, no end, suffering, words, empowerment, moving beyond, setting free, sorcery, literature, healing, and finally, perhaps most importantly, stories--so it seems fitting to use my brief opening remarks to tell you a true story in the personal narrative mode that I have learned mostly from reading her (57). Although I was born in Utah, I grew up in Southern California's Orange County where wilderness seemed either very remote or extremely repressed. By the time I was a teenager in the late 1960s, even the many orange groves that had given the county its name were disappearing to make way for an insatiably sprawling suburbia. My childhood landscape was inscribed mostly by mazes of apartment buildings, homogeneous residential developments with houses spaced two yards apart, ubiquitous strip malls, asphalted parking lots, generic industrial parks, innumerable fast food joints, and freeways full of foolish people in fast cars—with a few green-belts and parks set aside and maintained for their contrast against the rest of that civilized world.

I had become convinced that my only wilderness respite from the urbanization of Southern California would remain my family's annual three-week summer vacation to Utah and Idaho. Convinced, that is, until late one night when I was driving down Placentia Boulevard on my way home from a date going about ten miles over the 35 m.p.h. speed limit to ensure I made my 1:00 a.m. curfew.

On the lookout for patrol cars lurking along my familiar late-night route, I noticed something dog-like moving about 100 feet ahead of me, just on the edge of my headlights, emerging from the new housing development on my right and heading across the street toward the orange grove on my left. At first I thought it was a small German shepherd, but, as I drew closer I could make out its lean frame, long narrow muzzle, and gray coat. I realized, to my astonishment and delight, that I was seeing my first coyote, running wild through the streets of suburbia. Amazing.

He trotted across the street with some dispatch, mouth open with tongue lolling slightly to suggest both a panting that seemed to pantomime my own increased breathing and a slight smile that seemed to acknowledge my presence without so much as a glance in my direction. Then he vanished too quickly into the shadows of the orange trees where my eyes could not follow.

Awakening the next morning to the chuck-chuck of automatic lawn sprinklers and the aromas of our usual Sunday breakfast, I almost doubted the coyote vision I had seen the night before. I looked to my father for some rational explanation, just as Terry Tempest Williams once looked to the grandmother of one of her Navajo students to explain her hearing what she took to be Anasazi ghost drums beating all one night while she was camping alone in some Four Corners canyon. The Navajo grandmother smiled at Williams and said simply, "You heard what you heard" (*Pieces,* 78), just as my father smiled at me and said simply, "You saw what you saw."

After that, I never looked at Southern California in quite the same way as before, because I knew that within its borders something wild still survived—my unexpected coyote—whose presence, to paraphrase Wallace Stevens from "Anecdote of the Jar," made the slovenly suburbia surround it (48). For me, reading Terry Tempest Williams is like catching sight of an unexpected coyote in the middle of Orange County, California.

I am here as a witness to bear a kind of testimony regarding their connection and importance. Both experiences have confronted me with the complacent nonchalance with which I sometimes live my life, have encouraged me to pay more careful attention to the wondrous details of the world, have reminded me that surprising, even miraculous survivals still occur, have sustained me in discouragement, environmental and otherwise, have reassured me that the rational should not always try to explain the spiritual, have challenged me to consider previously unimaginable possibilities, have invited me to engage ethically the Other that is alien to my Self, have afforded me a certain measure of grace, have given me some of my own stories to tell, and have kept me always on the lookout for another coyote or another essay.

However, lest you assume that I run naively in step with Terry Tempest Williams and her Coyote Clan as a worshipful acolyte, unmindful of my responsibility to provide scholarly expertise tinged with a healthy skepticism, let me conclude my testimony with a descriptive warning about Coyote/Trickster from Williams herself:

> Coyote is paradox personified. His ambiguous nature, evasive qualities, and adaptability keep him at the center of Navajo folklore. He lives outside of time, immune to moral mores. . . . Trickster can be both profane and sacred, a bumbler and a hero. He lives somewhere between nature and culture; order and chaos; animal, human, and god. . . . Coyote is the embodiment of possibility, the split between creativity and the unknown. He eludes us. . . . He is intoxicating and his stories are delicious. Coyote is a raconteur. . . Coyote is a border figure, always on the fringe of society. Typically, Trickster has no home, so he sets his devious mind to play. . . . His thoughts are both organized and chaotic. He has vision but no follow through. . . . Things never quite work out as Trickster imagines. . . . Coyote can also be a soothsayer. . . .
>
> There is, however, a darker side to this character. Coyote is also aligned with "skinwalkers." Through witchcraft, skinwalkers explain for the Navajo things that would otherwise be left as unknowns: death, sickness, bad dreams, and ill luck. They report in darkness, always prowling between dusk and dawn; if seen, it is a sure sign trouble awaits you. . . . Coyote howls. Doors shut. (*Pieces,* 78-84)

If I were you, I would look out for Terry Tempest Williams just as you would look out for Coyote; after all, they belong to the same Trickster clan.

SUSAN ELIZABETH HOWE: As a preface, I'd like to say the Terry Tempest Williams expresses values in her work that are central to my faith. As I mature, one of my discoveries was that I viewed some values about life were not the same as everybody else's in the circle around me, but in Terry Tempest Williams's work I find values that are central to my heart and expressed with eloquence and power.

There are forces at work in our society that have as their goal the reduction of life. They have the effect of reducing life to a list, to less. This feeling was captured for me when I attended a Church meeting and heard someone say, "I'm so grateful whenever the Prophet says something because then I don't have to think." My feelings are that if you really believe you're a child of God then you have to learn what God knows. The first value that Terry Tempest Williams expresses for me is that she shows me that you have to participate fully and wholly in life. You have to work against the forces that reduce.

Second, for me that process starts from a spiritual center, and for me that center is a Mormon center. For Terry Tempest Williams, that process starts from a spiritual center, and that center is Mormon. Mike Austin, a graduate student at Santa Barbara, said that Terry came down to do a reading and a discussion for a graduate seminar he attended; and the attitude of the students toward Terry's Mormonness was: "So you were raised Mormon, yeah, yeah. Aren't you glad you've gotten beyond it?" She wouldn't let the discussion proceed. She insisted, "I *am* Mormon. I believe what Mormons believe. If you're going to talk to me, you have to do it in terms of my Mormonness. Don't tell me I can't believe what I believe."

In *Pieces of White Shell*, she started where she is, with the Great Basin, with the Navajo, with Mormonism—where they intersected and where not. She shows us how to have the willingness to live life at the center of where we are, and that to me is a thrilling thing.

Third, she is willing to listen to other cultures, willing to learn about the land. She writes about geology, about archaeology, about birds, about Mormons. I need to learn to love it all, to be open to all cultures, as God does.

Fourth, I need to enter other cultures with respect and trepidation. She has respect for what she can't understand.

Fifth, she can see things that normally we don't see. My brother is the same way and he's made me aware of things in a new way. Driving back from visiting him on the freeway, I was aware of hawks on the telephone poles, one hawk per pole, not moving, looking like part of the pole. I saw a bald eagle. Early this morning I saw Canadian geese flying in perfect formation across the fields. She told a story at the luncheon we had for her after she'd spoken to Gene England's class. She said that her aunts and uncles had never been to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge; but after *Refuge* became a best seller, they thought they should. So they drove all the way out there, got out of their cars, looked around at what was there, and said, "Terry's a better writer than we knew."

And sixth, she is fearless, whether that's confronting a mountain lion or camping all alone in a canyon in southern Utah. She's not afraid of asking questions and demanding answers or living without answers for a long time.

Seventh, she teaches me the value of story, the value of complexity in narrative. The forces of reduction are making our stories so simple. As a consequence the voices are many of silenced because their stories don't correspond to the official stories. Terry allows my experience to be part of the culture.

And finally, Terry has not been silenced at a time when many voices have been cut down or silenced.

SCOTT PARKIN: I feel that I am not part of her main audience. I am a reader, a writer, and a Mormon but I am not an academic and I approached Terry Tempest Williams with trepidation. I'm a child of the urban age. I grew up in San Diego, Denver, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Nature is something to be held back, something to be feared. I was in California, during the 1969 earthquake, so you could call me a naturephobe. So I have a slightly different approach to Terry Tempest Williams and her works. My first exposure to her was three months ago when she gave her presentation on "The Cultural Editor" at our fund-raiser. I had heard about her as a feminist, a mystic, even a pantheist, a social critic and an activist, but I hadn't read any of her works. I experienced a wall of reserve during that presentation. I wasn't sure what I thought. She spoke in images that were alien to me. I experience my life sitting at a desk in a darkened room looking at a computer screen, and walking from my technologically advanced and well-heated car to this technologically advanced and well-heated building this morning was a trying experience. *That's* nature, and it wasn't all that pleasant.

After the fund-raiser, I read *Refuge, An Unspoken Hunger*, and *Desert Quartet*. Whatever else may be true about Terry Tempest Williams; and while I agree with much of what she said and admire her as a writer, I don't feel included in her audience. I admire the strength of her vision and the voice she gives to the vision. I can disagree with anyone and often do. She engaged the mind and the will. I am explicitly excluded. She writes in the language of exclusion, even combativeness. I have a beer belly, so that's evil. I'm a man, so I'm suspect. And yet with the language of exclusion, she also offers a language of inclusion and discovery. I didn't know what I thought at the fund-raiser, and I still don't know what I think. It's easy to pick on her nonorthodoxies and that would be a mistake. She's a powerful writer, one we can read and learn from.

JANA REMY: In 1984 I was diagnosed with bone cancer. The ensuing treatment was the amputation of my right leg and ten months of high-dose chemotherapy treatments. This was a life-changing event. At the time of my diagnosis, I was a typical thirteen-year-old girl. During my treatment I spent more time in the hospital than at home, and my social life became white blood cell counts, CAT scans, and hospital cafeterias.

Sometimes I am grateful for this experience that changed my life. I avoided some of the junior high school-style foolishness, and became quickly aware of the issues of "quality of life" and the significance of the things that "matter most." However, at other times, I wish I hadn't become so serious at such a young age. The suffering I'd endured as a cancer patient left me with a resolve to never undergo a similar experience. If my cancer returned, I vowed to live my last days without medical intervention.

Three years ago, when my father was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer—a terminal disease—I counseled him to preserve his "quality of life" and to avoid aggressive or experimental treatments. Instead, my father battled the cancer by encouraging the strongest treatments his doctors would sanction. Four months later, after two major surgeries, and dozens of chemo and radiation treatments, he died. The horror of that experience is something that I cannot detail. Even now, the pain lingers as I remember the indignity of my father's suffering.

Within weeks of Dad's death, I read Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge*. Once I opened the book, I couldn't close it. I stayed up for the better part of a night, curled into a fetal position, reading and remembering. It was a cathartic experience. "Here is someone who knows cancer," I thought as I read through its pages. My experience was similar to the one which Williams describes as she participates in the Day of the Dead in Mexico. She says, "A wave of emotion crested in me and broke. I wept silently for all I had lost. I reentered my own landscape of grief with perfect recall" (277). Through participating in this foreign ritual, Williams finds healing.

In a similar way, I entered the foreign landscape of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge with Williams. I knew nothing of its denizens or topographical features but was drawn into her descriptions of its demise and rebirth and found healing. I could, for the first time, see the world as with a magical lens to bring my own pain into perspective and focus. I saw, with greater clarity, the futility of human intervention in a path of life and death that will continue nonetheless.

In the Prologue to *Refuge,* Williams explains that her motivation for writing the story is "an attempt to heal myself, to confront what I do not know, to create a path for myself with the idea that 'memory is the only way home'" (4). Williams's approach is unique. She offers an honest exploration of pain from both natural and unnatural causes, yet provides no easy answers or soothing platitudes.

I believe that *Refuge* is a monument to grief built with stones of truth, beauty, and love. It is a story of meditation, poetry, and an open soul. As I read it, I am transported to the shores of the Salt Lake where the wind bites my skin and the smell of brine is ripe in the air. I sit a little while, observing the natural landscape and absorbing the changes in the environment. Here I can find solace, peace, understanding and, yes, refuge.

DISCUSSION

CHERRY SILVER: I was recently discussing *Refuge* with a reading group, and one of the men present said, rather dismissively, "No man would ever write this. This is just the way a woman would see things." In short, he disparaged it as "woman's work." Your comments?

SCOTT: Well, everyone is looking at me since I'm the one who said I felt excluded by her work. I want to repeat that I admire her work. I enjoyed *Refuge* and *Unspoken Hunger,* but I found myself distanced from *Desert Quartet.* To the extent that I can say I'm a prototypical man, I think other men would feel the same way. But I'd pull back a little from my first statement. I don't think it's fair to say she excludes men. She has a different vision. That vision is different from mine. It's a different way of thinking that she offers to me; as a reader, I may say, "This is not my vision. I don't even like this vision. But it's something to consider."

PHIL: This commentary illustrates problems with the way we tend to teach people to read literature—for identification. People who read to identify points of sameness ought instead to read to identify difference. Williams is Other to me; that's partly why I enjoy reading her so much. I'm not interested in reading mirror images of myself—male, Mormon, Democrat, husband and father, professor, or whatever-and I'm not interested in totalizing her writing according to that with which I can identify. Williams' writing invites me to engage it without the totalizing effects of identification. She's not interested in reducing me to the same, just as I'm not interested in reducing her to the same; however, we are both interested in the conversation we can produce together.

SUSAN: It is one of the lessons that has come clear in the development of feminist thought that women have been trained to read as men for the past four hundred years. Okay, that's fine, but men should also be trained to read as women. One of the assumptions in that reader's statement is a disparagement of the ways women experience their lives and their world. Feminists would say, no, you can't do that, or, if you do, then to do it to your own disparagement. Terry writes from her position as a women. Men have a responsibility to do fuller and better readers that encompass that woman's position.

GENE: I read to encounter the "other." Franz Kafka said that literature is an axe for the frozen sea within us. Literature is sometimes an assault that brutal, that forcible, but it lets us contact the sea beneath where we find life and tenderness.

PHIL: I think it's as dangerous for women to read with strong identification as it is for men, because such identification totalizes the Other within the Self. I don't think I need to attempt read as a woman (whatever that means), for example, to appreciate writing by women any more than I need to embrace Hemingway's stoic male ideal to appreciate his writing. What I need to do is learn to engage women's writing or Hemingway's writing in productive ways.

For women readers to say "Williams expresses how I feel" or "I can really identify with her" actually does violence to Williams because such gestures of identification colonize Williams's writing by comprehending it within the "Same" of the readers' Self. Totalization in the name of gender (or anything else) remains totalization.

I really appreciate, for example, the way Jana responded to *Refuge* because she didn't try, as a cancer survivor herself, to appropriate Williams's story and language or to privilege herself as a definitive reader of the text. Rather, like Sethe and Paul D. in Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* Jana laid her story and language beside Williams's. That's what I mean by ethical reading.

SCOTT: I think there's a major difference about the assumptions of feminist writers and Terry's writings. It's dangerous to read based on what we expect.

GIDEON BURTON: I used to work for an engineering firm doing environmental assessments. For me, Williams's power isn't that she writes in a feminist form but that she is unique in blending genres, redeeming the typically sterile, distanced nature writing typical of male writers. It succeeds because it is both highly subjective and highly crafted, a careful balance of the confessional essay with the nature essay, accomplished through careful style, texture, and imagery.

MALE AUDIENCE MEMBER: My missionary companion married a radical feminist, and I thought *Refuge* would be the perfect wedding present to ease her toward understanding the roots of this man she married. I was startled when she told me she thought the book was sappy and self-indulgent. So I gave her *Backslider* and she loved it. She had a marvelous epiphany in which she discovered a whole religious side to her personality.

SUSAN: There's a problem with ascribing certain traits to women only and some to men. This woman—your friend's wife—enjoys irony and humor. Does that make her any less a woman? What is women's writing? How does Terry represent issues of gender in her text? Obviously there is an identification of women with the land. But there's a larger issue. Women's writing has been accused of being sentimental forever—it's been critiqued for a couple of centuries for being sentimental. Well, what's wrong with that? Males' motives are just as passionate for writing and in their writing, but it's disguised and distanced. What's wrong with connecting emotion to knowledge right up front? She's no less female or feminine.

SCOTT: Some readers struggle with the issue of Terry's orthodoxy. The grandmother's tumor is a difficult passage for many. Terry isn't just combatting orthodoxy or a masculine approach to nature but also to the orthodoxies of feminism. She's insisting on her own definition of being a feminist. I think it's really dangerous to dismiss someone because she doesn't fit the criteria.

Having said that, I also have to agree that there were places where I felt she wallowed emotionally, where she was self-indulgent, where I felt impatient to get on with the story. But it's a powerful story told her way. It's her own vision—not the feminist vision, not the ecoterrorist vision, not the Greenpeace vision—but her own.

LEVI PETERSON: Scott, you posted an essay on AML-List responding to the fund-raiser in which you described Terry's presentation as a performance. Would you care to comment?

SCOTT: As I said, I went to Terry's presentation with no background but sort of expecting a traditional speech or an off-the-cuff discussion. It was very performed. I wondered whether that was unfair. I wondered if I'd been a little short-changed. She hadn't shown me her; she'd shown me her work. But after reading her work, I realized that her self was revealed in her work. Nothing she does is what I expected. That's part of what I enjoyed and admired.

GENE: She's full of implicit contradictions. There is much to criticize, to confront, to be challenged by here. I studied at Stanford in California with Yvor Winters, the great anti-romanticist, who argued that the romantic approach to nature taken by Emerson and Whitman had done great damage to American literature. But look at Doug Thayer's Mr. *Wahlquist in Yellowstone* which proposes the very opposite vision, a descent into blackness and violence. It is clear that wilderness can both save and destroy, and any view that doesn't accommodate both possibilities is incomplete.

PHIL: Somehow traditional literary scholars have adopted the assumption that the personal voice is a less artistic voice, which is nonsense. *Refuge* is carefully structured and aesthetically polished. Williams is not just emoting. These are beautiful words, beautifully arranged. But we also need to be careful that we don't fall into the trap of assuming that there exists a natural hierarchy of readings or genres--that this kind of personal writing is inherently inferior to the hard-edged modernist writing. Williams's literary codes are no less rigorous, no less effective.

GIDEON BURTON: I think we should appreciate Terry Tempest Williams as much for her craft as for the compelling content of her nonfiction. She establishes and sustains a definite tone, one that is more poetic than narrative: her use of detailed and concrete language immediately invokes a sense of place that draws us into her discursive world.

GENE: One of the most stunning things Terry told us at BYU was how she wrote this book. Emerson advocated a "let it flow" spontaneous approach to writing. Emerson, of course, didn't write that way, although he tried to make it sound as though he did, and Whitman may actually have written that way. She told us of pain and struggle. She's not a self-indulgent writer in her work. It's hard, exploring new directions. She told us it took another two years after she thought the book was finished.

SUSAN: In fact, her editor told her, "You're holding back. You've got to put your emotions into it."

PHIL: Yes, I think she had a manuscript of some 500-600 pages and her editor said, "Here, in the last twenty pages, I think you're getting somewhere. Now start from there and rewrite it."

LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON: Scott and Gene, you've both mentioned "self-indulgence" in your descriptions. In what ways would you say she was self-indulgent?

SCOTT: I'm coming at this book from an entirely different angle than someone trained in literature. I think my response is more like that of the average reader who doesn't know what *Refuge* is about. I'm a technical writer. My job is to say something and go on to the next point. If there's repetition, it's because that point becomes the springboard for a discussion of a new set of instructions. In *Refuge*, I had the feeling that I was reading the same statement many times. I realize that she's looking in on grief during a long terminal illness and that's a long-term process. That's something I haven't had any experience with. My mother died too, but it was very suddenly. Now I'm discovering that dealing with it is still hard. Terry's mother gave up eight times in fifty pages. There was no new information. I didn't feel that we were getting anywhere.

LEVI: But isn't that what literature does? It's taking one idea and turning it over and over, living within it, looking at it repeatedly. I'm not saying anything disrespectful about technical writing, but don't they have different goals?

SCOTT: I think *Refuge* could have been written as three separate works: the story of what happened to the bird refuge, the stories of Diane's and Lulu's cancer, and Terry's feelings about nature. *Desert Quartet* is something of an anomaly for me. I least identified with it and least enjoyed it. I didn't feel that there was a lot of expansion of the thought in *Refuge.* I don't mean to be irreverent, but I saw a repetition of this theme: something bad happens to her mom, so Terry goes out to nature and discovers the moon in her belly. Those aren't bad discoveries, but I wanted a deeper penetration into the subject that I don't think happened.

PHIL: Now there's a Freudian slip by a male-centered reader!

JANA: Cancer books always deal with the subject so tidily, moving along through the process with an insight per day. But the reality of cancer isn't that way. It lingers. There's a terrible monotony. You live with the dying every day. There's a new perspective every day. It's always the same; it's never the same. It's very personal. It's awful. You live inside that repetition, that confusion, and that contradiction. I found that reality in the mood of the book.

LEVI: I'll admit that there are parts of the book I was willing to hasten along, but I'll also have to say that I read *Refuge* when it was already a national success so I envied Terry enormously. I admired her for finding a concept of the work that seized people's attention and structured the work with that concept: the lake, the birds, her mother's cancer—there's a national interest in cancer that she fused with the tradition of the nature essay. She was working at the Museum of Natural History where she had access to an enormous amount of information on the birds. She didn't just meet birds in the raw. She was smart enough to use the files.

PHIL: It doesn't make sense not to have these various narratives—the birds, the lake, the cancer, and so forth—commingled. As a naturalist, Williams makes her persona narrate everything from that perspective. In *Refuge,* all the landscapes—whether the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge or Diane Tempest's body—seem analogous to the narrator who engages them, partly because, in bringing them to language, the same narrative I/eye traces their contours and studies their ecosystems. No wonder they're commingled. Landscape, seasons, menses, tides, and other manifestations of nature are not linear; they are cyclic and circular and so suggest a nonlinear narrative, one that repeats and reverses itself on occasion.

GENE: I'd say she was self-indulgent both stylistically and morally, but I'm ambivalent about that criticism. Stylistically I think she uses pseudo references by dragging in words for an emotional response that the work doesn't earn on its own. An example is when she refers to "sacred walls of sandstone." At the same time, she is teaching me a new way to understand "sacred." Morally, I probably have the greatest problem with her claim that her books can substitute for children. Yet I say that while realizing that if others had not made similar sacrifices, the world would be less rich.

PHIL: Who's not self-indulgent? Anybody out there? Do you know any autobiography that isn't self-indulgent? In fact, that's the whole point of autobiography--to indulge the self by writing its life. Even James Joyce, the "great modern artificer," is as self-indulgent as anyone; he's just self-indulgent in ways we have learned to appreciate. Williams's self-indulgence, as we've discussed it here, seems mostly a function of stylistics more than anything else. Perhaps labeling her self-indulgent is another way of saying she doesn't write like a man or a modernist or a whatever and that we don't like it because we can't identify with it.

SUSAN: I had the interesting experience of writing a long poem about the birth of Jesus from the view point of Mary. What I was trying to say was that the birth process was a long and painful one. A young man who wrote a review of it said I was saying that Mary didn't want to give birth to Jesus. I was amazed that he got that interpretation out of the poem, but it raised the question for me: How do you aesthetically represent pain that goes on for a long time? Grief is a long-term thing. It goes on and on. How do you represent it authentically and aesthetically? I appreciate Terry as a really important figure in our literature.

SCOTT: From the viewpoint of aesthetics, if I hadn't had to read *Refuge* so I could talk about it on this panel, I would have put it down after a hundred pages. I found her short essays focused and interesting in contrast.

PHIL: I think the real problem here isn't self-indulgent writers but self-indulgent readers, who insist that the books they read produce, in Roland Barthes's terms, a comfortable practice of reading by replicating and reinforcing the cultural codes of the status quo. Such self-indulgent readers seek the pleasure of the text which allows them to totalize it rather than the bliss of the text which resists such totalization and, instead, discomforts and unsettles them. I prefer reading Williams's writing as texts of bliss and not texts of pleasure. (And, yes, I'm aware that this preference reflects a certain postmodern self-indulgence on my part.)

SUSAN: What's wrong with self-indulgence? What's wrong with acknowledging self-interest up front?

JANA: [This conclusion was written after the end of our session.] Following the panel, I overheard audience members chide Scott Parkin for not taking a stronger stance against Terry's writings (I guess everyone loves a little outrageous opposition). In ruminating over why this happened, I thought of a review of *Refuge* printed in the 1996 AML Annual, where the author, Laura Bush, explains the difficulty in censuring Williams' work. She writes, "Maybe we all feel guilty for criticizing experiences portrayed so personally that negative scrutiny might appear to be an attack on Williams herself" (47). I think that we find so much to admire in books such as *Refuge* that we are willing to overlook or forgive any textual faults.

Unfortunately, our panel session ended rather abruptly because of time constraints. Though our time was limited, I felt that we broached many significant aspects of Williams's work. As the panel moderator, I must thank each panelist for their unique perspective; the discussion provided excellent insight into Williams' writings.

WORKS CITED

Note: I reconstructed this panel from written opening statements by some participants and from my own holograph notes, submitting the results to the panelists for completion. Jana Remy, Phillip Snyder, and Gene England did so. —LFA

Stevens, Wallace. "Anecdote of the Jar." *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play*. Ed. Holly Stevens. New York: Knopf, 1971.

Williams, Terry Tempest. *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1987.

---. "Undressing the Bear." *An Unspoken Hunger: Essays from the Field*. New York: Pantheon, 1994. 51-59.

Many Mansions: LDS Genre Fiction in and out of the Mormon Market

INTRODUCTION

Lee Allred is a science fiction writers. Pat Birkedahl was the recipient of the Association for Mormon Letters Young Adult Literature - Award in 1996 for her novel *Angie* (New York: Fawcett Juniper, 1957), which she published under the name Pat Bezzant. She also uses Bezzant for poetry and short fiction, reserving Birkedahl for nonfiction.

Scott Bronson is a husband and father and thespian. He considers his fiction writing an extension of his dramatic inclinations. Scott has appeared on stage and screen in Utah in numerous productions over the years. He is a member of the Playwright's Circle, the Screen Actors Guild, and is on the board of the Actors Repertory Theatre Ensemble. He has published one short story and two play and had several others produced.

Thom Duncan had two stories in what may well be the first LDS genre fiction anthology ever published: *LDSF: Science Fiction by and for Mormons,* 1982. His first science fiction adventure novel written exclusively for the LDS market, *Moroni Smith: In the Land of Zarahemla,* was published by Horizon Publishers in 1991 and was received by the reading public with enthusiastic disinterest. Nevertheless, he has written two sequels, *Moroni Smith: In Search of the Gold Plates,* published electronically in 1992 by his own publishing company, Zion's Fiction, and Moroni *Smith and the Sword of Laban.* As a living example of the truism, "What goes around, comes around," Thom now moderates LDSF, an e-mail discussion list for writers and readers of LDS science fiction.

PAT BIRKEDAHL:

All fiction can be considered genre fiction, including blockbusters and "literary fiction," as successful stories of any type share many characteristics of their particular genre.

Writing aimed at the Mormon market also has its own rules and can be considered a genre, just as each division of the children's market is defined by its audience.

Albert Zuckerman outlined the characteristics of the "big" book in his own bestseller, *Writing the Blockbuster Novel.* I, along with almost every other Mormon writer I know, harbor hopes (fantasies?) of being a Mormon writer with success in that particular genre.

Mormon writers have been particularly successful as star performers in science fiction/fantasy: Orson Scott Card, Tracy Hickman, Julia West, Dave Wolverton as novelists, and M. Shayne Bell in short fiction. Many, many Mormon writers are in the process of breaking out in SF. The number of Mormon winners in the Writers of the Future Contest is astounding. First-place winners include Wolverton, Bell, and new writers Virginia Baker, John Brown, and

Susan Kroupa. Card, the first of the Mormon SF writers to receive acclaim, has won science fiction and fantasy's highest honors, the Nebula and the Hugo. This raises the question of why they've done so well, and one answer is that living in Utah gives them the experience of living in a real time warp.

Mormons are also plentiful in the children's book market, though none but the deceased Mormon novelist Virginia Sorensen has won the Newbery (with *Miracles on Maple Hill*, 1957), considered the highest award for excellence in children's literature. Examples of Mormon writers successful in the national market are Dean Hughes, Louise Plummer, Elaine Fergusen, A. E. Cannon, and Carol Lynch Williams, who all write teen and/or middle-grade fiction. Williams and Launi Anderson also write separate titles in the local Latter-day Daughters series. Rick Walton is increasingly successful in the picture book market as are several Mormon illustrators.

Romance, the largest of the genre markets in both titles and readership, has many, many successful Mormon writers, though I don't now of any bestseller Mormon romance writers. In mystery, Anne Perry is the best-known Mormon writer.

J. SCOTT BRONSON: I work for Dave Wolverton and he called me this morning asking me to come be on this panel in his place. He said, "You know what I would say." I actually don't, so I'll just say what I have to say and, hopefully, it'll be similar to what he'd have to say.

In thinking about my interest in genre fiction, I've decided to start with my thespian roots. I'm a member of the Screen Actors Guild. As an actor in this state, that's (mostly) good, but it means that it's difficult, if not impossible, to get any work from the number one source of film and video production in Utah: namely, the Church. They don't want to hire members of the guild for reasons related to payment scales and residuals and such. So it's just understood that I don't go to auditions when the Church is looking for actors.

That's okay, I suppose, except when I go to see *Legacy* or *Mountain of the Lord* where one of the things they've made a big fuss about is that they've hired actors from the Screen Actors Guild out of Los Angeles or New York. The message seems clear; if they're producing something on the level of an industrial video—an instructional video for internal distribution—all they need do is hire the local talent; as if to say, We're not trying to impress anybody, get the two-bit actors.

But when it comes to a *Legacy*, or some other project that may have a more public profile, they run off to Los Angeles and New York, but, what they wind up with—in my opinion—is two-bit actors from Los Angeles and New York. The truth is that the local talent is prodigious. In reviewing many of those productions, several people I know could have acted the pants off the people they actually got. It was so jarring to see *Legacy*, and the first thought that flashed into my mind when I saw the actress who played the lead was, "I've seen her before . . . naked!" Years before I had seen her in a dreadful film with a lot of big-name actors in which she appeared nude.

My second thought was that Carrie Morgan could have done this tons better. She's a brilliant actress and she's right here in Utah. Or she was. She's teaching in New York now. Maybe now they'll want her. So, perhaps you can understand why the whole thing leaves a sour taste in my mouth. The message to me as an actor is: "If you want to work for the Mormon people, go away from us. Then come back. When you've gained worldly credit."

And I see the same thing happening with literature. There is a small handful of writers doing well in the mormon market in various genres; Anita Stansfield with romance, Chris

Heimerdinger in young adult science fiction/fantasy primarily with his "Tennis Shoes" series, Gerald Lund with historical fiction, and Lee Nelson, but very few people really make a go of it. let alone a living. But Scott Card goes out and makes a name for himself and every publisher in Utah begs him for a book, any book, even Deseret Book, knowing that he'll sell like mad because of his reputation outside Utah. And the message that sends me is to write stuff that non-Mormons will like so that someday I can write for my own people.

LEE (laughing): You just revealed my game plan!

SCOTT: That's the way it is, and I suppose that's the way it's got to be for now. But it seems backwards to me. The prophecy is that the world will be coming to Zion for its art, but instead we're going to the world, sending our artists to the world and then begging them to come back with whatever it is they've gained out there. That's just backwards. Let me say it again—it's backwards.

THOM DUNCAN: Literarily, I'm a tri-polar person. I've written more plays than fiction, but since 1968, I've been incapable of writing a play that doesn't look at some aspect of Mormon history. On movie scripts, I seem to be able to write about anything. However, my fiction—short stories and novels—are absolutely for the Mormon market. I have no desire to do what you guys are doing—writing genre science fiction for the national market. I prefer to be one of those writers who explores our religion, society, and culture. In drama, if it's not Mormon, I can't, to use a worldly phrase, seem to get it up.

Chris Heimerdinger's tennis shoe series is a prime example of what I mean by genre LDS science fiction. If you take out the Mormonism, it doesn't work; and he's said in public that he's more a preacher than a writer. Scott is right, I think, that to achieve massive success in the Mormon market, you have to achieve massive success on the outside. Despite that, I still consider myself a Mormon ethnic writer—meaning that I'm a Mormon writer talking about and to my own ethnic group. And the success of genre fiction of the kind I am talking about is related to the maturity of the society. in this case Mormonism.

I joined the Church in 1964 and wrote a science fiction adventure about Adam and Eve, but there was no place to market it. While I was attending a writers' convention, an editor at Deseret Book told me that Mormons don't read fiction. We've since proved them wrong. This same editor also told me that Mormons don't read anything over 150 pages long. We've proved them wrong on that score, too. LDS genre fiction will be produced by writers, in spite of hell or high water and publishing houses. Chris Heimerdinger is making a living as a full-time writer. More and more that'll happen. As the Church becomes larger, more diverse, and more universal—and less Utah—we'll see more LDS genre fiction. We're learning to look objectively at ourselves. It should someday be possible to write a story about a bishop who swears . . .

BENSON PARKINSON: I'm interested in the idea of voice in fiction. Is there or should there be a distinctive Mormon voice in LDS genre writing, both regional and national? I mean something beyond the doctrinal and thematic preoccupations that come up in our writing.

PAT: I saw my first episode of *Battlestar Galactica* at a friend's house without knowing anything about it, and I immediately said, "A Mormon wrote that." She didn't believe me. "There's no way you can know that." I've bristled a bit at the development of the theory in multi-cultural fiction that only a writer from that culture can write for that audience. Yet I also see the value of that approach because

Mormonism has some characteristics that are hard for someone outside the culture to understand, even if they've studied it. I'm writing a long novel on the Utah War. It's true that anybody writing on this topic has to start with the records, and it's true that Mormons aren't the same people that they were 150 years ago; but I still think that a Mormon would have more clues about the culture than an outsider, even one who researches it diligent.

SCOTT: The writer's job is that of creating a world. What are the rules in that universe? When you change worlds, the rules also change. When I pick up a book about Mormonism by a non-Mormon, there's automatically a reaction of, "I don't have to believe this."

BEN: On the way driving down here this morning, I was listening to a feature on NPR Mississippi Delta blues. It has greatly influenced both rock 'n roll and country/western, but it's also a very specific local sound. I'm asking whether we don't need to develop a strong, distinctive local voice that can then spill over and inspire our writing for national audiences.

THOM: The national image of Mormonism can actually work against a writer's efforts to find a national audience. The picture of the Church created through its public relations efforts—the pioneer trek reenactment, for instance—is pretty simple and pretty heroic, but it excludes the author's world of nineteenth-century Utah, the best portrayal of which, in my opinion, is Orson Scott Card's *Saints*. I've heard of readers who turn four shades of green when they get to the scene where Dinah, in her seventies, finally decides to let Brigham Young into her marriage bed. These readers view Scott as an apostate because his world of the pioneers is so opposed to the public image of the pioneers that the Church has created. I don't know if people will see past the right-wing facade.

GENE ENGLAND: This discussion reminds me of Chaim Potok's comments when he spoke out here a few years ago. His own religious community, his own synagogue, saw his work as apostate because he was exposing their internal conflicts. He said that literature is about core values and core conflicts, so literature about a particular people might well appeal to a national audience before it finds acceptance locally.

PAT: I've had to have non-Mormon readers for my works of fiction because it's hard to find a Mormon reader who can divorce himself or herself from the missionary response or look past the ingrained response that we have a public relations duty because we're Mormons. As a journalist, I ran against an attitude that facts aren't as important as supporting a view. Public relations is a higher calling than journalism. I don't feel good about the public relations response. I want it all there, the good, the bad, and the ugly. There's no need to whitewash elements in our culture. The battle with authoritarianism comes out in my writing. It's not something I intended. I've always had a problem with why Laban was killed, why it's better for one man to die than for a nation to dwindle in unbelief. If you can justify cold-blooded murder, what else can you justify? Is it all right to cheat in business deals if you're paying tithing on the ill-gotten gains? What does it do to our consciousness as a people? These dark secrets are part of our culture, just as the Old Testament is part of Jewish literature.

ELINOR HYDE: Isn't this a case of loving the sinner but hating the sin? Aren't there things that are better left unsaid? I look at the bishops and stake presidents in my area who are doctors and lawyers and I remember them when they were growing up as rowdy neighborhood kids. Do I want to talk about what they were like then, or do I want to praise them for what they've been able to achieve since then?

THOM: Kathryn Kidd's AML paper last year was about how she immediately alienates everybody in whatever ward she's in with every new book she writes because people assume she's writing about *them.* In 1973, I wrote a musical about Joseph Smith that Theron Luke, then editor of the Provo *Herald,* reviewed as "Joseph Smith, Superstar." The actor who played Joseph Smith was a returned missionary. During the tar and feathering scene, his costume came untucked and people could see his garments. There were complaints, so the next night he didn't wear the garments; the costume came untucked again, and people could see that he wasn't wearing them. And there were complaints. My point is that there are going to be complaints either way. People are always going to go ballistic over some dumb thing. The only thing is to be true to your own work.

DAVID RICHARDSON: But don't we have to be true to the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number? We want to be true to the historical facts, warts, and all, but we also want to help people progress and perfect themselves. We want to be true to ourselves but we can also damage ourselves and offend little ones. The scriptures talk about hating your father and mother. God destroys people in Noah's flood. Do we end up hurting ourselves by focusing on the negative?

LEE: A couple of weeks ago, I was on a business trip to Eugene, Oregon, which is something of a center for science fiction writers. I had lunch with several SF writers, including some Nebula Award winners and nominees. Bruce Holland Rogers, gathering material for his next column, was asking everyone around the table, "Why do you write? What do you want to accomplish as a writer?" (laughing) My first thought was "Missionary work." But of course, you can't say *that!* (laughing again). Even if it *is* true!

Seriously—for a moment, I didn't know how to answer his question. I finally said, "I have a world-view. I have themes and subjects I'd like to see presented. Here's a world-view, here are the issues it thinks about and deals with."

In my national fiction, the story I recently won the Writers of the Future with, "For the Strength of the Hills," I wrote about the Utah War, but I wrote to a national, not a Mormon market. It's all told from the point of view of the U.S. Army, not the Mormons. In fact, there are only two Mormon characters in it with speaking lines, a prisoner delirious with fever from his wounds, and that ol' murderous bushwacker Porter Rockwell—both unreliable narrators. The story, then is from the non-Mormon perspective and it's about issues that both non-Mormons and Mormons can find common ground with.

What happens when personal values, personal beliefs conflict with the values of the larger community? I've had quite a bit of feedback from non-Mormon readers, and if anything, it resonates even more with them that it does my Mormon readers.

SCOTT: Books are about people—this person, a real person. It's not about doctrine. It's incumbent upon us understand and love one another. Yet sometimes the Spirit communicates regardless. I wrote a play that was a real stinker. All of my theatre friends avoided me and wouldn't even talk to me about it because it was such a bad play. I knew it. It was written all wrong. Then five years later, somebody grabbed me and exclaimed, "You wrote *City of Peace?* It did this and that for me." What could I say. It was trash. I've written some fairly dark things, and I've asked myself, "Why am I writing this?" But I've had readers tell me, "I loved it. It made me cry." I've always wondered about the wars in the Book of Mormon. Alma offends me. That's my problem. I'm sorry if what I write offends you, but that's your problem.

GENE: I think you're talking about the paradoxical nature of literature. Brigham Young said unequivocally that it was impossible to build faith without knowing vice and evil. That presented me with a real dilemma. How do I do that at BYU? The answer is through literature. I knew the Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* was considered to be a dangerous book that weakened the faith of members, but the national reviewers loved it. They finally understood what made Mormons tick. Tory Anderson's essay in *Tending the Garden* is a strong statement about why the best way to preach morality is by stories. The best way to do missionary work is to be honest about our own experience.

LEE: The main character in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is Satan. "The snake has all the best lines." Milton actually tells a moral story by making Satan a *sympathetic* character.

WOMAN: I've wondered why there isn't a Mormon horror genre because it's such a moral form—stark black and white. Stephen King is a moral writer.

SCOTT: I think that will be the last genre to establish itself among Mormon writers.

GENE: But some people are saying that Brian Evenson is either the Mormon Kafka or a horror writer. To show the evilness in evil, you have to make people face what evil is like. He just won the O. Henry Prize, the first Mormon to claim that award.

DAN LUBBEN: Shouldn't Mormon stories be compelling reasons for looking into the culture? They might hurt someone, might set them against the Church.

SCOTT: I don't care.

PAT: I don't either. To write something meaningful to others it has to matter to me. I want to write about real people in real struggles—or real to me. It is fiction. I don't believe we need to hid the facts to win friends.

SCOTT: I've written a cycle of horror stories about a boy brought up to become a Savior. I have the first and the last one. The first one is based on a real incident told me by an aunt. Her husband, in front of this little boy, dropped a kitten over the fence for his two terriers to maul. The kitten managed to escape, more mangled each time, until they'd finally killed it after three or four tries. Then he dropped it over the fence of the other neighbor's so that she'd think her dog killed it. And she did. She was devastated. The story is about this boy who experiences the feelings of both the kitten and the dog and who chooses to become one with the dogs. These stories scare my wife. The last story is also based on a true incident. Two boys on a San Diego shooting range have struck up a conversation with a young couple who were there with the mother-in-law and their baby daughter, sort of a picnic setting. One boy tells the other one, "Let's kill them and take their guns." The second boy doesn't want to but the first one puts the gun to his head and says, "That's what we're going to do." So they tie up the dad and mom, and kill them all, execution style. I don't care if it offends you. It offends me. They're supposed to be offensive.

THOM: I wrote a play about the firing of three BYU professors in 1911 for teaching evolution and higher criticism. It says some pretty dark things about the man who was then president of BYU, George Brimhall. He committed suicide a decade later, but I cheated and compressed that suicide into the time period of the firings, as he tries to deal with his own inadequate defense of the professors and his ambivalence about the conflict between obedience and academic freedom. When I read it at Sunstone, there were relatives of both parties present. Ann Chamberlin, a relative of Ralph Chamberlin, said I made him a much nice guy than he really was in real life. Margaret Young, who is a relative of Brimhall's, doesn't like the ending, but not because of the suicide.

DAVE RICHARDSON: I can see that we need to study evil and its consequences, but is there any justification for glorifying evil—for portraying a prophet as an adulterer, for instance?

SCOTT: At BYU, I took a class in reading analytically from Terry Warner, followed up by writing analytically. The whole point of the exercise is that writers can't lie. If I personally believe it, it will come out. What I really believe is going to come through. So it's a moot point to say that something "glorifies" evil or not. It's not possible.

LEE: I want to back up to the point Ben was making about a distinctive Mormon voice. Judith Moffett, a science fiction writer who recently moved to Utah for a couple years, was asked to write an essay about the local Utah SF scene in the annual Nebula Awards anthology (Vol. 31). She commented that she was surprised the first time she attended Xenobia, one of the main SF writing groups in Utah, because one of the critical tools in our critique sessions, alongside of grammar and plot resolution, was moral and ethical concerns. They don't critique stories like that in Philadelphia, she said. She thought it kind of weird, but she kind of liked it, too. It was refreshing. Moral considerations are an inherent characteristic of our ethnic community—one, if not the predominant, characteristic.

LEE: One could argue that most of the standard "category genres" are inherently moral. This is simplistic, of course, but in mystery, crime must pay and justice must triumph--the bad guy has to be caught. Westerns are quintessential good vs. evil, white hat vs. black hat. Horror, too, (although I can't read it myself) can be thought of as moral, dealing as it does with good vs. evil.

PAT: Carol Lynch Williams had a national reputation before she submitted her first book to Aspen. It was returned heavily edited with the meanings that were inherent in the text spelled out. She simply said, "I won't work with the purple pen." Her point was that the meanings were already there or the purple pen couldn't have added them, so it wasn't necessary. She could enforce those conditions, though because of her national reputation, and someone who is confined only to the local market often can't. I'd say the difference between the national and the local market is stylistic. Here's a piece of advice: the adverb is death in New York but very big in Utah.

BEN: I'd like to ask our panelists to comment more on the idea of writing horror for the regional LDS market. We tell each other horror stories all the time, for instance at Scout and Young Women camps, and many of those stories draw on our heritage and theology. They probably have a different emphasis than most of the national genre offerings, for example, maybe stressing humor more than terror, but couldn't the genre of horror be adapted for a Mormon regional audience?

THOM: The Book of Mormon really scares me. If the story about Coriantumr and Shiz fighting and Shiz raising up on his hands after his head has been cut off isn't horror, then what is? Or what about the description of the day of the locusts in the book of Revelation, or the flesh melting off people's bones in Zephaniah? The first Mormon horror story I heard was one that proved the Church was true. It was about a non-Mormon kid at a party where there was a ouija board. A Mormon kid told him to go into another room with the ouija board and see if he could call up a spirit by the name of Gadianton. He goes into the other room. There are sounds of battle going on in the other room. He comes out, all cut and bleeding and says, "Who the *hell* is this Gadianton guy?" I'm working on a novel now based on the book of Revelation, if you want to talk about horror.

PAT: I think horror should be a great Mormon genre—all this belief in the spirit world and spirit possession.

LEE: I want to be sure that Scott has a chance to explain Writers of the Future and

Thom explains LDSF.

SCOTT: Writers of the Future is the largest contest in the world for the science fiction short story, funded very generously by L. Ron Hubbard. Dave Wolverton is the first judge. There have been a lot of winners from Utah. There's a quarterly contest. The finalists are in the book and invited to a workshop and party. There are cash prizes and a grand prize. First-place winners from Utah include Susan Kroupa, Russell Asplund, and Virginia Baker.

THOM: In June 1997 I set up LDSF list, a sublist from AML-List, to talk specifically about LDS speculative fiction, a category that is broad enough to include science fiction, fantasy, and horror. We have four or five messages a day from about sixty members who are both readers and writers, and they talk about the stuff we've been talking about today.

BEN: I'd like to add that on AML-List we're very interested in genre fiction as well. We're about to launch a romance and Young Adult column, we've had a long-running speculative fiction column currently being written by Lee Allred, we've had science fiction theme weeks, and it's something we try to encourage in various other ways. A lot of us are subscribed to both lists, including myself. We've got some flyers out front with subscription information.

Note: This panel was reconstructed from my notes, then submitted to the participants for their completion and corrections. Those who responded were Pat Birkedahl and Thom Duncan. —LFA

Liminality and Disruption: Cody Judy, *Gadianton*, and a Willing Sustaining of Belief

Nola D. Smith

On the evening of Sunday, February 7, 1993, roughly 17,000 Mormon students gathered to hear a fireside in BYU's Marriot Center. The invited guest was eighty-six-year-old Howard W. Hunter, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The ritual performance text of the evening was expected to proceed along the lines typical of any sort of Mormon meeting: a hymn or sacred music, an invocation, introductory business, sermons, another hymn, and finally a benediction.

But just as President Hunter took the podium to speak, a man carrying a briefcase ran into the hall, leaped a barrier, and rushed up onto the platform where the podium was located. This young man, Cody Judy, announced that he had dynamite in his briefcase and held to Hunter's head what he claimed was a detonator (*Suspect*, 20).[1]

Technicians immediately terminated TV broadcast feed to a number of other student audiences throughout the western United States, disconnecting the outlying congregations from the action. In the arena, all that the students could see was a man holding what looked to many to be a gun near Hunter's head. With the microphone shut off, they could not hear Judy's demand that Hunter read aloud a document Judy believed to be revelation, dissolving the church leadership and proclaiming Judy the new prophet ("Judy," 1, 8). Yet the students recognized the situation as dangerous, even life-threatening, to both the second most important leader in the church and possibly to themselves.

A small percentage of the audience ran out of the arena. The majority of the students stood but stayed at their seats. After a few moments of shock, someone in the group spontaneously began to sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," and almost instantly the majority of the students joined in the hymn ("Terrorist," 1, 20). Strikingly, witnesses report that at Ricks College in Idaho ("Satellite," 21) (and, students told me, at the Utah State University—though I have not been able to verify it), the large student audience, cut off from the proceedings, impulsively reacted in precisely the same way. With both life and, symbolically, culture at risk, these audiences reverted to the pre-industrial, to elements of chant and music, elements heightened by the audience's sense of shared cultural community and heritage. The event moved from ritual to theatre to transformed ritual.

Years later, on the same BYU campus, a play is staged. In the play a man, though struggling to support his family and keep his sons on missions, gives up his job so that a co-worker may keep hers, thus continuing the insurance coverage that will allow her to give birth to a baby who she knows will be severely malformed. In the rush of the events in the play, the act is almost unnoticed. To the few observers, the act seems quixotic at best.

What happens in the play *Gadianton* contradicts the anthropological assumption that theatre is a genre which separates ritual from belief. What happened during the Cody Judy liminal social/religious crisis gives weight to the hypothesis that theatre, like ritual, consists more of a "willing sustaining of belief" than, in Coleridge's terms, a "willing suspension of disbelief."

Anthropologist Victor Turner proposed that both rituals and their descendants, the arts, are deliberately created as sites where society may renew itself through witnessing "normal" conditions in a state of flux, then participating in mental reassessment, and finally in creating new conditions for their society. Created drama acts as a mirror of the community's social drama. Turner's schema explains how social drama progresses, like a dramatic plot, through linear steps of breach, crisis, redress, and reconciliation (*From*, 10). What transpires is that first a public breach occurs in the normal working of society, "ranging from some grave transgression of the code of manners to an act of violence" (10)—such as Judy's intrusion. Next, the group experiences crisis as some members choose sides, and some members may try to reconcile these factions. Critics of the crisis, especially those invested in keeping the peace such as elders, lawmakers, and law enforcers, subsequently attempt to "apply redressive machinery" (10) to heal the breach and restore the social fabric, whether in its original form or in a new pattern reconciling the factions. If the factions cannot be reconciled, the social drama returns to crisis, cycling until resolution can be reached.

A society tested with the interruption and suspension of normality is forced by the social drama to view its own behavior in relation to its own values—values it may have hitherto taken for granted (Turner, *Anthropology*, 35). Faced with social chaos, that society may learn to appreciate social cosmos. Turner postulates that social drama is converted to artistic drama or ritual as the members of the community attempt to find meaning in the jumble of events and in the behaviors they themselves manifested during the crisis—a meaning generated by "'feelingly thinking' about the interconnectedness of past and present" (Turner, *From*, 14). Society reenacts and reinvents the story in order to comprehend itself.

Through his terms "liminal" and "liminoid," from the Latin word "limen," or threshold (*From*, 41), Turner struggles to explain anthropologically the ways societies search for meaning. The liminal experience, ranging from bar fights to Purim and Mardi Gras to elaborate traditional occasions such as tribal rites of passage, is a ritual or ritual-based time of deliberately created social ambiguity, disjunction when social rules may be inverted or reformatted in order to allow the emotional examination of those rules in a new light.

The liminoid experience, on the other hand, is a product of post-industrial rationality and its dividing of the sacred from everyday behaviors. The liminoid manifests itself in voluntary leisure activities such as drama, books, painting, etc. These performances may invert or criticize social, economic, or political structures, and create a forum for discussion. (Turner, *From*, 24-55; Turner, *Anthropology*, 102).

Victor Turner hypothesizes that ritual links the cognitive to the emotional and generative. Ritual is the transformative element that turns the tribal myth of any society into a pattern for life. As anthropologist David Knowlton expresses it, applying Turner even to testimony meetings, "Ritual is the stage, the formative myth the script, and we [the believers] are the actors. . . . The act of testimony or the process is a replaying of our formative myths" (24). Similarly, the students attending the February 1993 meeting were taking time out to enter a sacred place—made sacred by consensus at least for the period of the ritual—hoping to hear a sermon that would tie everyday life and religious belief together, setting a pattern for proper behavior. To understand the significance of the breach and crisis that followed, it is necessary to know a little of the Mormon Church's formative myth. (I speak as ethnodramaturg of the "narrative vehicles which convey to the community the values it collectively holds" [Knowlton, 24]).

In her book *Mormonism*, Jan Shipps states that the prophets of any religion tend to arise in times of crisis, when an authoritative voice is needed to restore faith, to create order from social or religious chaos (41-44). As she states, "Enough is known about the origins of most of the world's religions to make it clear that this kind of cultural chaos was a precondition for the coming forth of the prophets and enlightened ones whose words and deeds became the focus of the movements that developed into major religious traditions" (42). In the years leading up to 1820, the northeastern area of the United States experienced waves of intense religious revival, missionary effort, and competition between various Protestant denominations, to such an extent that western New York of the time is now referred to as the "burnt" or "Burned over District" (7). It was a period of liminality, of social/religious ambiguity, rising to the intensity of social crisis as faction contended with faction for converts, each with its own interpretation of the Bible. Appealing to the Bible led young Joseph to the First Vision; the modern Church he subsequently organized was and is rooted in the concept of open communication between an individual and divinity. "For Mormons, the Joseph Smith Story is our formative myth, and it is pregnant with the most fundamental LDS beliefs—prayer and personal revelation, truth and apostasy" (Knowlton, 24) and the necessity of current prophetic leadership (Ninth Article of Faith).

The members of the fledgling church were not welcomed by the larger American community. They were driven from settlement to settlement in government-condoned pogroms until Brigham Young led the Mormon people to temporary safety in what would become the state of Utah.

Cody Judy knew this history, considered himself a member of the community of Mormons, and chose his methods according to ritual. Though he would not know the term, clearly he meant his attack to create a liminal moment, a space of social ambiguity leading to a reformation of the social order. He saw himself as the successor to Joseph Smith, a solitary man receiving heavenly instruction to organize a church. He had come dressed in a white suit, albeit soiled; white clothing is the Mormon uniform for sacred rites of passage such as baptisms, weddings, and temple rituals. He had pulled his long hair back into a ponytail, making token conformity to the clean-cut look encouraged for Mormon men. His demands were given to the proper authority to be read to the general population, just as pronouncements from the Presidency of the Church are delivered by bishops in their home congregations. He was iconically and theatrically prepared to replace President Hunter as the focus of the meeting and leader of the Church.

The student population thought otherwise. In conversations with me, students called Judy "a bad actor" and a man who, by assaulting established authority, had shown himself outside the bounds. To them the situation was liminoid, a metacommentary and insurgent performance. Faced with a direct challenge to religious integrity reminiscent of their ancestors' day, the students surprised themselves. They disrupted Judy's disruptive performance and impelled the meeting back to ritual with a powerfully iconic song taught to Mormons from infancy and often sung, standing, by devout congregations when the prophet, or president of the Church, enters into their sacred spaces. This song was a story they told of themselves, a spontaneous declaration of community solidarity and the core of their belief. The lack of panic and the unifying communal song was a Mormon response of their cultural paradigm, a natural mode of Mormon reconciliation.

The song "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" confused Cody Judy; some observers speculate that Judy thought the students were prematurely proclaiming him their leader. The instant of disorientation gave a security guard an opportunity to grab him from behind. As Judy knocked him down, immediately a splinter faction of students attacked Judy—a vigilante attempt to apply Turner's redressive machinery. One student sprayed mace in Judy's face; security guards then knocked Judy from the podium and held him down. A group of students rushed forward and some began striking and kicking him. Though a number of students later reported feeling some sympathy with this angry coterie, most disapproved of the actions. Many expressed sentiments that the aggressors had "seen too many Rambo movies." They condemned a theatrical response to a theatrical invasion.

Judy was arrested and removed from the arena. The main body of students enjoyed the positive aftermath of a liminal experience and would not leave the room, refusing to discontinue their transformed ritual text. Their unified singing had brought a "good spirit" into the event that had transformed the experience positively (Nash, 4). They had experienced as a group a sort of "flow," or the holistic sensation of acting with total involvement. Turner paraphrases Csikszentmihalyi and MacAloon:

> Flow . . . is a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. . . . We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future. (*From*, 55-56)

For the students, Judy's disruption created a liminal crisis, a sudden moment "when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future not yet begun" (44). But Mormons, who value order and pre-scheduled, pre-planned activities, moved quickly to end the discomfort of liminality. They reinscribed the event, merging the meanings of the past and present and creating a more intensely energized future. Having been forced to weigh the value of their social norms and having responded out of the essence of their belief, the students (including those whose TV feed was now restored) listened at a much more receptive level to an address on the subject, ironically enough, of adversity ("Pres.," 21).

Only after the sermon concluded could the arena be cleared and swept for bombs. The "detonator" was discovered to be a toy cellular phone wrapped in electrical tape—a mere prop. Judy's briefcase was taken outside and examined; rather than a volatile device, it contained scriptures and revelations he said he had received from God. The briefcase was blown up by a bomb squad.

Incidentally, the first artistic expression that resulted from the occurrence appeared within a few days in the student newspaper. It was a political cartoon featuring a man staring at a fire-extinguisher box labeled, "In case of emergency break glass." Inside the box, instead of fire-fighting equipment, there was a hymnal.

But what if there were no happy ending? No circle of supportive students, no security guards to come to the rescue? What do embattled Saints do when they cannot flee to Zion because Zion has become corrupt?

Eric Samuelsen's wonderfully complex play *Gadianton* premiered January 29-February 8, 1997, after winning the 1996 Mormon Arts Festival Playwriting Competition at Tuacahn. In contrast to many "home literature" plays and pageants, which use familiar Mormon icons and sometimes melodramatic emotions to shore up our "faith," *Gadianton* uses realistic and thought-provoking situations, challenging each of us to reassess our own commitment to gospel principles. Rather than showing "revolving door Saints" quitting or joining the church, *Gadianton* depicts souls choosing whether or not to behave as disciples of Christ.

Gadianton is set in present-day St. George, Utah, the city "downwind" of the Eisenhower administration's nuclear tests. Cancers, birth-defects, and degenerative diseases plague the town, but it is the moral cancers that destroy the community. The play pits Mormon against Mormon in what the playwright termed "a dog-eat-dog" world "of savage competition" (*Why*). The fluidly cinematic plot telescopes times and places, interweaving and layering and overlapping scenes, continuously demanding that the viewer pay attention to the social flux displayed.

The story revolves around the fortunes of prosperous Onti Enterprises, a software company founded by entrepreneur Mahonri Ward. Ward had started with an idea for a product that would make life easier and now finds himself overwhelmed by the unexpectedly large success of his own brainchild. His silent partners hire organizational expert Fred Whitmore to establish professional efficiency—and boost profits. Whitmore begins gently enough, by axing recreational events and charity work from company time. He then begins to eye the workers themselves.

One of the first to fall under Whitmore's scrutiny is McKay Todd, a supervisor in Onti's mail room. Todd is a dedicated, debt-ridden new bishop, struggling to make a living despite his bad back and the difficulties of balancing his family life with his responsibilities to his working-class ward. Todd had originally come in to help organize Onti's shipments and, by default, had ended up hiring dozens of badly needed assistants for other departments—hirees including members of his ward who desperately needed employment. Todd sees these people as his friends, who now have an opportunity to support themselves and their families. Whitmore sees them as fat to be trimmed.

Whitmore shows Ward's partners a way to rapidly increase their gains before merging with a rival company. Prior to making the merger announcement, they must drastically cut costs, creating an artificially high increase in profits and leading to a sharp rise in stock value. The fastest way to cut costs? Lay off one-third of the company, two thousand employees. Downsize, or, as Whitmore says euphemistically, "Right-size for the Future." A perfectly legitimate business practice.

So what is the problem? If, as Turner assumes, both liminal social drama and artificially created liminoid theatre follow the pattern of public breach, crisis, redressive action, and restoration, then what is the public breach examined in this drama? Where is the social infraction that Turner postulates? What aspect of our behavior and values is Samuelsen holding up for our scrutiny? What redressive action can be taken?

In the November 1995 *Brigham Young Magazine*, LDS business expert Warner Woodworth discusses how mass layoffs done in the name of good corporate competitiveness may be in exact opposition to gospel principles. According to Woodworth, "Downsizing, de-massing, cutbacks, mass layoffs—whatever terms one uses—these are the so-called requirements of efficiency today" (35). The overwhelming focus on the bottom line over all other concerns creates downside effects: "Playing hardball with one's employees takes a huge toll as people lose their trust, loyalty and commitment to the company" (35-36). Management styles that stress "ego, power, and confrontation" (37) and the accumulation of personal wealth at the expense of employees' needs fosters "authoritarian practices and aggressive leadership" sometimes bordering on the criminal (36). "In the long run, they [top executives] are selling the corporation out," (36) Woodworth concludes.

Woodworth demonstrates that early LDS church leaders stood in sharp contrast to the type of executive who believes in "win-lose," "fixed pie view of economics." For example, he portrays the Prophet Joseph as a hypothetical "Chairman of the Board of the Pioneer Organization," an entity designed "to enable every person to obtain a 'stewardship' so as to have 'as much as is sufficient for himself and his family (D&C 42:32)" (38). Joseph, as a wise managerial leader, based his administration on the precepts of the Doctrine and Covenants: teaching the people by word and example the virtue of work; helping them find opportunities to support their families; encouraging them to learn thrift and industry; and growing in charity by giving of their means to those in need (38). He emphasized that "true leadership consisted of teaching correct principles and empowering individuals so that they governed themselves" (38)—the antithesis to power-seeking dictatorial managers. Joseph, Brigham Young, and their associates recognized that "modern scripture does not distinguish between the spiritual and temporal, but rather suggests that they are the same unto God (D&C 29:34)" (36), that Christian belief ought to create Christian behavior even in the marketplace.

Samuelsen's play highlights a less admirable leadership style. His title, *Gadianton*, is the name of an arch-criminal in the Book of Mormon, described by the prophet Helaman as an ambitious man "exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft" (Hel. 2:4), who followed the advice of "that same being who put it into the heart . . . to carry on the work of darkness, . . . from the beginning (Hel. 6:29). By following his example, the Nephites gained great riches but also grew proud and arrogant. They oppressed the poor, mocked all they had held sacred, plundered, lied, and murdered their way to the complete destruction of their society.

Samuelsen demonstrates that these scriptural examples resonate in our modern society. While gain and efficiency are hardly immoral, seeking personal gain at the expense of the suffering of others. In *Gadianton* valuing only the absolute bottom line corrupts absolutely. In a rather "Tony Kushner-esque" dramatic touch it is Gadianton himself, garbed in ancient robes, who appears to Fred Whitmore instructing and encouraging Whitmore in his corporate ruthlessness.

So the "social breach" which drives this play is not a legal transgression but a moral one, leading to, as Todd accuses Ward, "an act of economic violence" (120). It is a case of capitalism versus Christianity, portrayed with particularly Mormon, not Marxist, overtones.

Handled less skillfully, the plot of *Gadianton* could easily turn into a standard melodrama of good little guys vs. bad profiteers. But Samuelsen doesn't preach; he demonstrates contrasts. How is a new bishop calling a church court for a man suspected of spouse abuse different from a CEO firing employees to enhance the bottom line? Is it right for a man to give away a job to help someone else, a job that is keeping his sons on their missions? Is a woman who dispassionately observes and voyeuristically profits from the suffering of others better than someone who causes their misfortune?

Some of Samuelsen's best points are made by illustrating the struggles of the people in the middle, not obviously good or bad. These are the people at Onti Enterprises who believe their jobs are safe from the cutbacks. For example, Onti Media Relations Specialist Helen Bryson chooses "niceness" over opposition, giving in to Whitmore's demand that she put a good "spin" on the layoffs and lie to the press. She and others suppress their uneasy scruples because the money is good. Their decisions are made all the more difficult because the problem is so hazy; Whitmore's business practices *are* fairly normal. And even if what the higher echelon is doing is perhaps unethical, what can they do? Quit their jobs? They might as well stop using the computer because it broadcasts electromagnetic field that might cause cancer (*Gadianton,* 72) or stop breathing the air that might be contaminated. One must pretend that "all is well in Zion (25)." Besides, everything happened so *fast.*

Samuelsen puts the dilemma in perspective by framing his story with the disaster of nuclear testing. The bomb "Dirty Harry" was authorized by Eisenhower, who felt that the radiation exposure of a few thousand people in the name of national security was worth the price. It is ironic that those scheduling the test waited until the wind was blowing the "right" direction—away from Los Angeles and Las Vegas and right towards the patriotic Utah Republicans who backed "Ike." The federal government and the bomb were forces beyond local control—but the local people had to live with the consequences. It was too late to leave. No matter if they washed the ash off the vegetables from the garden, they had to drink the milk from the cows that ate the grass (55). They could not stop having the damaged babies (55). They could not avoid breathing the tainted air.

Samuelsen's damaged city becomes a metaphor for mortality. Like it or not, we all live in a postmodern civic and economic culture of consumption. We individually have little power to change the system. Yet we strengthen ourselves and our world when we individually close the gap between our work/financial activities/social interactions on the one hand, and our spiritual knowledge on the other (D&C 29:34), acting with a faith that seems, at times, like foolishness. We create a genuine, humane civilization when we follow the Spirit rather than the letter of the law.

Samuelsen's play infuses greater spirit into Mormon drama. It does so following Turner's model—though not exactly as Turner postulates. In this play there is a moral infraction, a crisis in which people choose sides, and a re-forming of the social fabric, as some people find new work. Others, however, never find their place again. There is no earthly redressive force to heal the breach, no temporal action to be taken against the uncaring forces that affect the powerless in the play. In Mormon terms, the redressive action will come later. The play is satisfactory on some level because we feel that Bishop Todd has acted morally and will eventually receive a heavenly reward for his choice. On other levels, however, the play is upsetting—provoking us to reassess our own motivations and actions against the measuring stick that Samuelsen has held up. This liminoid dramatic experience is particularly powerful, not because drama has been disassociated from believing ritual, but, to the contrary, because belief is irrefutably integral to the dramatic plot. Here theatre contains the core of ritual.

In his work *The Empty Space,* Peter Brook describes the effect of "representation" on the dramatic stage on an audience. In Brooks's theory, true representation "abolishes that difference between yesterday and today. It takes yesterday's action and makes it live again in every one of its aspects—including its immediacy" (139). On what is known as a "good night" the actor works before "an audience that by chance brings an active interest and life to its watching role," an audience that assists and transforms the repetitive process of the presentation to vibrant life:

> With this assistance . . . the assistance of eyes and focus and desires and enjoyment and concentrations, repetition turns into representation. Then the word representation no longer separates actor and audience, show and public, it envelopes them. What is present for one is present for the other. The audience too has undergone a change. It has come from a life outside the theatre that is essentially repetitive to a special arena in which each moment is lived more clearly and more tensely. (140)

In other words, theatre comes to life when the audience has a liminally engaging and transformative experience in a liminoid dramatic space, created by an audience that believes that their normal life and the theatrical experience have connection, an audience engaged in making its own meaning. The distinctions between the liminal obligatory crisis and the voluntarily- attended liminoid performance become blurred, even irrelevant. Theatre is most dynamic when modern dramatic methods reveal and reflect the inner-most "story of the people." Vital theatre does not replace ritual; it *is* ritual.

Theatre survives because of beliefs—the belief that the dramatic event is a valuable expenditure of time and resources, the belief actors have in their talents, the belief of the producers that the community will find enough merit in the production to support it financially. True, audiences must willingly suspend their disbelief, but only about externals. We will, for example, go along with the pretense that the paper object on stage is really a palm tree, or that crowds just happen to erupt into lively production numbers. We can accept conventions. However, we cannot will ourselves to b moved by what does not move us or to be amus ed by that which we do not find amusing. N one can disbelieve that a show does not engag us, any more than one can disbelieve that a jok is not funny and genuinely laugh. At best, al one can achieve is an objective, intellectua assessment that somebody else might like th punch line. Audiences do not come to th theatre to disbelieve; they come to believe.

In artistic drama, as in social drama, a perio of liminal intensity and transformation does no occur merely by chance; it can occur only if the performative text confronts and connects to the audience's fundamental fears, hopes, and sens of community, revealing unity or even irreconcilable disharmony. Without that connection theatre is only a hollow ritual of repetition. Th Cody Judy incident revealed the true sense o Mormon community that must be addressed by Mormon artists. To become a powerful theatrical force, Mormon theatre must move beyond mere repetition of standard tales to stories that provoke both thought and faith. Eric Samuelsen's *Gadianton* is a giant step in that direction.

NOLA DIANE SMITH is a doctoral candidate in theatre history and criticism interning as a dramaturg with Brigham Young University's Department of Theatre and Media Arts. She performed at the 1996 AML Conference in "About Being Female: Stories We Agree to Tell." She lives in Provo with her husband and three daughters.

NOTE

1. For additional details on this incident, see articles published in a special issue of the *Daily Universe* (see Works Cited) and other articles that week.

WORKS CITED

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1969.

"Judy Reveals Letter Content in One-on-One Interview." *Daily Universe*, Feb. 9, 1993.

Knowlton, David C. "Belief, Metaphor, and Rhetoric: The Mormon Practice of Testimony Bearing." *Sunstone* 15.1 (April 1991): 20-27.

Nash, Amanda. "Proper Reminder." Letter. *Daily Universe*, 11 Feb. 1993.

"Pres. Hunter's Fireside Resumes Following Scare." Feb. 8, 1993, 21.

Samuelsen, Eric. *Gadianton: A Play in Two Acts*. First written 1994, first staged 29 January-8 February 1997. Unpublished manuscript. Staged Draft 1/97, in my possession. Used by permission.

Why Gadianton? Gadianton Theatre Program, 1997. Copy in my possession.

"Satellite Audience Left in Dark." *Daily Universe*, Feb. 8, 1993, 21.

Shipps, Jan. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1985.

"Terrorist Interrupts Fireside." *Daily Universe*, Feb. 8, 1993, 21.

Turner, Victor. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ, 1986.

---. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Seriousness of Human Play*. New York: PAJ, 1982.

Woodworth, Warner. "Restoring All Things: The Managerial and Economic Views of Early Mormon Leaders." *Brigham Young Magazine*, November 1995: 35-41.

The Vision of the Cowboy Jesus Ten Years Later

Levi S. Peterson

During the ten years since the publication of *The Backslider*, a modest degree of commentary on the book has come to my attention through letters, reviews, articles, and personal conversations. Of particular interest to me has been commentary on the vision of the Cowboy Jesus, which appears to have emerged as the most controversial aspect of the novel.

I began work on *The Backslider* in 1982 with the idea in mind that I would cast its chapters into the dignified and poetic rhetoric that I esteemed I had achieved in my just-published collection of short stories *The Canyons of Grace* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). After four chapters, I concluded that my attempt to achieve an impressive style was failing. Quite suddenly, in the summer of 1983, I struck off a new first chapter full of comic incident and told with simple sentence structure harmonious with Frank's uneducated thought processes. That fall I read Douglas Thayer's novel *Summer Fire* (Midvale UT: Orion Books, 1983), which narrates in a relentlessly simple style the naive point of view of its juvenile protagonist. Suddenly short elliptical sentences sounded totally right, and mine now seemed to line up, one after another, without dissonance.

In rewriting I also made my four existing chapters much more comic and went on from there to infuse the later chapters with a similar humor. Many readers have commented on the comic qualities of *The Backslider*, which I judge to be farcical rather than witty. Regrettably, the subtle humor of the novel of manners is not one of my strengths. As an author I will say that the appearance of humor during the act of composition is intuitive and unpredictable. For example, in the later novel, I found myself exploiting the humor in Jeremy's psychotic insistence that he is a little girl named Alice—a possibility I certainly wasn't mindful of while writing the brutal scene in which Frank rescues Jeremy from bleeding to death after he has cut off his penis and testicles.

Sometimes I felt an enormous abyss between the suffering Frank and the comic Frank, and I wondered dozens of times whether the two could remain in the same narrative. They did remain together because they had to. My primary interest was in the suffering, penitential Frank, yet I myself could not bear to live with him day after day while composing the novel without the relief that the hardheaded, crossgrained Frank brought me.

Some readers have complained that none of my Mormon characters are normal. I readily grant that Frank, Jeremy, and their mother, Margaret, are not typical Mormons. However, many of my lesser Mormon characters—Uncle Lonnie, Raymond, and Helen, for example—strike me as coming quite close to what you might have expected to encounter in small towns in southern Utah during the 1950s. Is

Uncle Lonnie abnormal because he drops his underwear to show Frank the outbreak of shingles on his back and then drops his underwear further to show him the scar from an ax wound on his buttocks? That came directly from real life when my sister (who, incidentally, refuses to this day to read *The Backslider*) made her husband drop his LDS garments to show me the shingles on his back and then made him drop them further, as an afterthought, to show me the long scar on his buttocks where surgeons had extracted a needle he had sat on.

A number of reviewers have commented on the grotesque quality of *The Backslider*. I assume that none of my characters are grotesque at all moments. The word *grotesque* certainly wasn't in my mind while I wrote the novel. Still it is true that a man like Jeremy who has literally carved a new identity from his own flesh and blood is monstrous and horrifying. I did not create Jeremy out of thin air. It is possible that I first encountered him inside myself. I knew at a very early age that my mother wished that I had been born a girl. I was far into adulthood before I realized how profoundly I wanted to accommodate her impossible wish.

I never knew anyone like Jeremy in actual life. However, I have heard more than once of men who cut off their own sex organs, and Jeremy can also be said to be an attempt on my part to create a plausible personality for a man who could do that to himself. A psychiatric nurse from Brooklyn, a Catholic, wrote me that she found Jeremy entirely believable except that his language is more coherent than she would expect from a profoundly psychotic person.

Some readers have said that the excessive penitence I depict in Frank is not a Mormon problem and that, in dealing with it, I am off track as far as Latter-day Saints are concerned. Mormons, I am reminded, believe in a loving, forgiving God and in a regimen of behavior that promotes, rather than denies, earthly happiness. Even Frank admits to Marianne that his self-imposed ascetic regimen is not typical of other Mormons. So why indeed did I elect to treat this theme? Because many, many Mormons, though they believe in a gentle God, do not behave as if they do.

I see many signs of unnecessary self-denial among the Mormons. I know a couple of my age who, upon marrying, debated whether contraception was permitted a married couple and decided it was not; needless to say, they have raised a large family. A young friend of mine, apparently of the same mind, is having babies as rapidly as she can even though her home is made hellish by the swarm of children that already exists there. I know innumerable Mormons whose Sabbaths, meticulously observed, are tinged with frustration and boredom. It appears that God hates entertainment and pleasure on his sacred day. In her later years, my mother fasted every Sunday of the month. When she was very old, she refused to knit on Sunday, though the boredom of having nothing else to do was a genuine hardship. I have difficulty seeing how anyone who has read Spencer W. Kimball's *The Miracle of Forgiveness* can believe Mormons are capable of forgiving themselves readily. Despite its optimistic title, that book reminds its readers that sin has to be suffered for intensely.

I do not suggest that Mormons have any monopoly on penitence and self-denial. In portraying Frank Windham as a Mormon monk during the middle portions of my novel, I refer to an ascetic tradition as old as Christianity itself—the withdrawal of men and women from the world for the purpose of leading a sparse, devout life. Frank takes license for his penitential behavior from his immediate ancestors, especially his mother and grandmother. Even so, he may be viewed as inventing a mode of penitential behavior that exceeds the pattern of his immediate ancestors.

I come now to the climactic event of *The Backslider,* Frank's vision of the Cowboy Jesus. As the novel approaches its finish, Frank is bent upon atoning for his unquenchable appetites through shedding his own blood. I attempted to infuse these final pages with suspense, apparently with too much success since a number of readers informed me that, seeing no way out for Frank and being reluctant to experience his looming self-immolation, they had continued their reading with only the greatest of discipline. I had known from my earliest thoughts about writing this novel that I wanted my protagonist to be saved by the offer of an unconditional grace. I did not see until very late in the process of writing the novel just how that offer should be depicted. An epiphany of some sort seemed in order because Frank is consistently shown to be a believer in spiritual manifestations, and in fact he conceives of his ascetic regimen as communicated to him through several dark visions.

I came upon the Cowboy Jesus in an almost accidental way. On a couple of occasions, Marianne informs Frank that she has had a recurring day dream in which, being lost, she is rescued by a rider who turns out to be Jesus in the regalia of a cowboy. Late in the writing process, as I sought to conceive of an epiphany that would seem plausible, given the tone and characterization up to this point, it occurred to me that Marianne's whimsical day dream could serve as an intense reality for Frank. The vision comes to Frank in the rest room of the Panguitch North Ward meetinghouse where he, having just baptized Marianne a Mormon, has gone to change from his wet clothes. In fact, the vision occurs just as Frank flushes the urinal he has used. At this moment the rest room fades from sight and Frank sees, approaching through a thicket of junipers, a horseman who, as it turns out, is Jesus.

This vision is mentioned in almost any discussion of my novel. A non-Mormon friend who assigned an honors class at Ball State University in Indiana to read the book, reported that his students called the vision "a stroke of genius." None of them was Mormon. Some Mormon readers have expressed strong approval of the vision, while other Mormon readers have expressed equally strong disapproval. Among Mormons, as I said earlier, the vision appears to generate controversy. Two very dear friends, both respected professors of English at BYU, show opposite reactions in published articles. Eugene England, in an essay review published in *BYU Studies,* writes:

> That vision is one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies I have encountered in modern fiction. It is the capstone to an extraordinary achievement, not only in thematic content that is seriously theological but in form that is meticulously crafted to give permanent being to that content. (101)

Of a different spirit is Richard Cracroft. In a presidential address delivered to the Association for Mormon Letters, Cracroft calls on Mormon literary critics to eschew what he defines as a *sophic* understanding based upon science and reason and to embrace a *mantic* understanding based on faith and the witness of the Holy Spirit. England's review of *The Backslider,* says Cracroft, is a typical example of the "sophic creeds of secularism" at work. Citing England's statement quoted above, Cracroft writes:

> My own sophic literary sensibilities cheer England's testimonial. *The Backslider* is true and faithful to a sophic and secular vision of literature. But my mantic sensibilities recoil, as have so many Latter-day Saint readers who . . . are shocked by this profanation of Christ, as they are by the grotesque God of Frank's strange, quasi-Calvinistic—but decidedly not LDS—theology. (40)

In an AML-List posting, Cracroft spoke of the Cowboy Jesus episode as the vision of "Our Lord of the Urinal" (7-17-95). This appellation, the Vision of Our Lord of the Urinal, is one I willingly accept. It is a pleasant irony that one day, quite by accident, Cracroft and I found ourselves side by side at the urinals in the downtown ZCMI store in Salt Lake City, where we exchanged cordial words about *The Backslider.*

Subscribers to the AML-List have from time to time discussed *The Backslider,* engaging in what might be called a minor debate over the propriety and effectiveness of the vision of the Cowboy Jesus. The hardworking moderator of the AML-List, Benson Parkinson, has written about what he tactfully terms "the restroom epiphany." Parkinson interpreted the unorthodox circumstances of the vision as accommodating the non-Mormon reader who can thus accept the verisimilitude of such a vision more readily:

> The unexpectedness of the location, the fact that Christ speaks in the vernacular, that he smokes, all this strikes me as the author winking his eye, saying, this isn't serious, and because it isn't, you, as an educated, worldly reader, have permission to take it seriously. (AML-List, 6-22-95)

In a later posting, Parkinson repeated his perception that I was writing for an audience beyond the circle of the faithful. Saying he was not offended by the comedy and "nose-tweaking" of the vision, he identified it with magical realism where the reader is willing to accept an impossible version of reality. "This," writes Parkinson, "is to naturalize it for a non-believing audience, but a vision naturalized for unbelievers is a vision without any fundamental power" (10-6-95). Parkinson's insights reminded me that in fact, while writing *The Backslider,* I did conceive of my audience as a mixture of liberal Mormons and sympathetic Gentiles who might be interested in how a young Mormon man who has internalized some of the fringe lunacies of the Mormon faith is rescued by an application of a traditional concept of grace. I can't say that I thought of myself as writing strictly for the unfaithful because I know many, many liberal Mormons who are devout believers. However, I understood from the beginning that my novel would not appeal to the large majority of Mormons. I was aware of engaging in what Parkinson aptly calls "nose-tweaking"—an endeavor that is perhaps to be judged as futile since the large majority of Mormons will never read the book and their noses will remain forever untweaked.

Some contributors to the AML-List declared themselves undeterred by the comic aspects of the vision of the Cowboy Jesus. "When it got to the part where Jesus says, 'Why can't you believe my blood was enough. . . . Why do you have to shed yours too?'" wrote Michael Austin, "I was choking back tears and taking every word dead seriously" (6-22-95). Austin also later posted a brief explanation why he considers *The Backslider* to be authentically Mormon in its advocacy of the concept of grace:

> Basically, the Paradox of Mormon Identity is this: The most central elements of Mormon theology are the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the reality of God's grace. However, these are also the most central elements of Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and almost every other Christian religion. That which makes us most essentially ourselves, therefore, is also that which most fails to distinguish us from others. And it has been my observation for some time that, in order to compensate for this paradox, ordinary rank-and-file Mormons often attempt to represent themselves as believers in an authoritarian, works-oriented theology that has nothing whatsoever to do with the Church's real teachings. The vital concept of grace, which should be at the center of any Mormon's religious vocabulary, has often become an unfortunate casualty in our attempts to construct ourselves as a unique and peculiar people. (4-23-96)

Unquestionably Austin was taking a bold stand for a Mormon. For him it was irrelevant that the Cowboy Jesus swears and smokes a cigarette. I feel truly honored that Austin finds my book one that teaches us "that it is possible to create an identifiably Mormon character in an identifiably Mormon novel while, at the same time, placing the Atonement of Jesus Christ at the center of the work" (4-23-96).

I am neither surprised nor offended that some participants in the discussion of the vision of the Cowboy Jesus on the AML-List take exception to a swearing, cigarette-smoking Jesus. Richard Dilworth Rust summarized the orthodox Mormon view of grace as guaranteeing resurrection to all regardless of merit but offering exaltation upon the condition of the individual's repentance and righteous behavior. With a humorous incisiveness, Rust wrote:

> The cowboy Jesus with his smoking and profanity does not fit the Jesus in the Book of Mormon who says, "that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do." In *The Backslider* this is reversed: "That which I have seen ye do," Peterson's Jesus seems to say to the cowboy, "that I shall do." (4-25-96)

Admittedly the Jesus of Mormon doctrine could not possibly condone a relaxed attitude toward bad language and the Word of Wisdom. However, another AML-List participant maintained that it was not necessary for a fictional Jesus to hew to the model of the doctrinal Jesus. The Cowboy Jesus, wrote John Bennion, "is a fictional construct, designed to achieve certain disturbing narrative effects. Why should a fictional Jesus mimic a doctrinal one?" (4-29-96).

Siding with Rust, another participant, John Binder, quickly replied to Bennion's question. A fictional Jesus ought to resemble the doctrinal Jesus, said Binder, because "the issue, with respect to Mormon literature, is that if a writer is attempting to teach his or her readers something about a doctrinal issue—such as the atonement—it would be worth 'getting it right' doctrinally" (4-30-96).

Yet another participant, Robert Paxton, aligned himself with Bennion against Rust and Binder:

> While, on the one hand, I want LDS literature to present the truth and the doctrine to the world—or at least the reading public—(if that is our intent), a part of me also wants to say that we can create even extreme and jarring poetic images for the sake of communicating an idea effectively. (4-30-96)

As a finale to this debate, Robert Starling sided with Rust and Binder in favor of a doctrinally correct Jesus in fiction. Starling took exception to Austin's position that Latter-day Saints have overemphasized peripheral aspects of the gospel to the neglect of the central doctrine of grace. Starling particularly defended the Word of Wisdom, which the Lord has given as "a simple *measuring rod* of our commitment to Him." Authors have failed their Latter-day Saint readership if they undermine the important principle of obedience. "Thus," concluded Starling, "I have problems with a cowboy-Christ who doesn't—along with his forgiveness—say: "go and sin no more" (5-14-96).

What do I think, these ten years later, of the Cowboy Jesus and of the novel in which he appears? I was greatly flattered when an acquaintance said that *The Backslider* is now a part of the Utah landscape. I would be happy if I had written a novel for which I will be remembered. The odds against it, however, are vast in a civilization where tens of thousands of new novels are published each year.

It is impossible to guess all the reasons a reader might have for disliking a novel. Obviously belief, attitude, and experience condition a reader's aesthetic responses profoundly. What might be called secondary qualities of graphic description and earthy dialogue in *The Backslider* inevitably repel most Mormon readers. A Mormon physician from California told me by letter that I had, in effect, blasphemed by having

Frank, during his backsliding phase, hope that "there was somewhere a fellow could get away from the Big Son of a Bitch in the Sky" (59). Wrote this physician:

> Were I to rate the book for various categories of consideration, I would give it an A in contemporary fiction, an A for its believable setting in south-central Utah, an A for your development of the various characters involved, a strong B for your introduction and even expounding upon Gospel principles, but a rock-bottom F for your desecration of deity. (11-8-90)

It is possible that I would presently enjoy a wider readership if I had written *The Backslider* without graphic description and profane dialogue. However, I can scarcely imagine the novel without those qualities. Certainly I would have had to rein in a good deal of the defiance toward conformity that I felt at the moment of writing the book. Also, the graphic and profane qualities of the novel appeal in a way I could not have foreseen to certain active, faithful Latter-day Saints.

More than one person has said to me with some fervor: "Your novel is the reason I am still a Mormon." I recall my astonishment when, about a year after *The Backslider* first appeared, a Mormon lawyer informed me on the steps of the federal court building in Salt Lake City that my novel had been instrumental in reactivating two of his backsliding friends. A little later a group of women invited me to talk to them about my book and informed me, in the course of the evening, that they had named themselves The Backsliders. These vivacious, intelligent women were restless and unhappy over the status of women among the Mormons. Seven years following my first visit, these women invited me back to their group. I'm pleased to say that they struck me as much more at peace with their faith. I think when they first encountered it, my novel assisted them in their difficult endeavor to remain within the Church.

Not infrequently my novel comforts those who love real-life backsliders. At a party one evening, a woman told me she felt more reconciled to her father's suicide because, after reading *The Backslider*, she felt hopeful that God would forgive him for killing himself. One correspondent, though she thinks I did an injustice "by portraying every 'active' Mormon as either being senile or fanatical," found much good in *The Backslider*. She wrote:

> I am an active Mormon. For you to portray Christ as a smoker seemed very sacrilegious, but later I came to the conclusion that we needed that. We need to be aware that the person behind the cigarette can very well be virtuous. He can love his God, his family and himself. Whether he smokes or doesn't smoke has nothing to do with what kind of a man he is inside.
>
> I have a son who is the unrepentant Frank. He is a hard worker; he is impetuous; he smokes, he drinks; he sleeps with girls; he has been a heartache for years. Your book helped me to look past all of that to the boy inside, and I thank you for that. (2-4-89)

I must say that a communication of this sort, intimate and reflective, touches me deeply. It makes me feel as if I am playing an active, rather than a passive, role in Mormonism. The truth is that I see myself as helping a certain kind of Mormon remain Mormon. I did not anticipate this result when I began writing fiction about Mormons, but I rejoice in it nonetheless. Though my fame and influence are obviously to be very modest indeed, they are enough to encourage me to keep writing. As for Frank and the rangeland Jesus who appears in the nick of time to save him from self-destruction, I really can't think of any other satisfactory way to have given body, drama, and objectivity to the emotions from which they sprang. I am grateful for anyone who reads *The Backslider*, and I certainly do not resent criticism. Unquestionably, adverse attention is much better than no attention at all.

LEVI S. PETERSON is Professor of English at Weber State University in Ogden. He read an earlier version of this paper at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 1996. This version was subsequently published on the AML-List.

WORKS CITED

AML-List@cc.weber.edu. Moderated by Benson Y. Parkinson. byparkinson@cc.weber.edu

Cracroft, Richard L. "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide." *AML Annual 1994*, 2 vols., 1:34-43.

England, Eugene. "Beyond 'Jack Fiction': Recent Achievement in the Mormon Novel." Rev. of *The Backslider*. *BYU Studies* 28.2 (Spring 1988): 97-109.

Kimball, Spencer W. *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969.

Peterson, Levi S. *The Backslider*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986.

"A Representative Woman": President Mrs. Kimball and a Rhetoric of Deseret

Janelle M. Higbee

I thought I should begin with a distillation of a whole pile of rhetorical theory by giving you my personal working definition of the study of "rhetoric." I see rhetoric not as the much-maligned tool of unethical manipulation, but as a practical art—an art of context and of responsibility. The art is in knowing "what bit of language to use when" (Lloyd-Jones, 22).

Speech communications scholars Carole Spitzack and Kathryn Carter have suggested that the study of a women's rhetoric should focus on "women leaders who seem to have developed distinctly female modes of leadership." Karlyn Kohrs Campbell extends the argument by suggesting that such women may be found specifically in out-groups that challenge established political authority; these leaders must be especially inventive to be heard at all and are thus likely to be talented rhetoricians (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg, 1226).

In looking for such rhetorically talented female leaders, the religious and political rhetoric of early Latter-day Saint women is a particularly noteworthy case. Nineteenth-century Mormon women not only battled sexism and political norms—arguing fervently for both universal women's suffrage and for the freedom to practice polygamy—but they did so from their position as members of a stigmatized and persecuted religious community. Despite their membership in a patriarchally ordered society, their belief in a divinely directed but exclusively male priesthood, and their supposed subjugation in polygamous marriages, many early Mormon women were strong and inventive advocates of women's rights. One exemplary figure is Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball (1818-98), a key figure in the Church's Relief Society organization and a leader in the national woman's suffrage movement of the nineteenth century.

Sarah M. Kimball presents an intriguing example of female leadership techniques and rhetorical strategy. A founding member of the Female Relief Society in Nauvoo, she was later instrumental in reestablishing the organization in Utah. In Salt Lake City she was called to be president of the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society; she served in that position for over forty years, from 1857 until her death in 1898, where she was highly influential and effective in instituting and organizing church-wide Relief Society programs. During the same four decades, she also served in two general Relief Society presidencies—as counselor to Eliza R. Snow and secretary to Zina D. H. Young; as a member of the territorial committee of the People's Party and of the constitutional convention that composed Utah's petition for statehood in 1882 (Derr, 24); and as a national delegate and president of the Utah Woman's Suffrage Association. Kimball was a spiritual leader dedicated to stimulating thought in and provoking action from her Relief Society sisters and her fellow citizens. Her rhetorical techniques establish her authority to speak, which she used on different occasions both to "educate and agitate" and to "instruct and happify" her audiences (Kimball, "Auto-Biography," 51).

What made Kimball effective and influential as a leader and rhetor? This paper is a sampler from a larger project—a type of historiography which examines Kimball's public discourse within its social contexts, analyzing samples of her rhetoric from several different genres: autobiographical sketch, political rally, ceremonial speeches, encomiums for spiritual leaders, official minutes from weekly Relief Society meetings, and the text of her own life's actions. These various texts survey the broad range of Kimball's social and spiritual concerns, and showcase her role as an effective and inventive rhetor.

Both rhetorical and feminist scholars have called for more work to be done in the arenas of women's public discourse. As a practical art, rhetoric shares a commonality with feminism, which is increasingly concerned with valuing commonly overlooked particulars. Susan Jarratt draws the comparison: "Rhetoric has always been about practice, and as such parallels the historical association of women with craft and knack—the daily arts of lived experience" (3). Rhetorical and feminist critics recognize a connection between theory and practice, belief and action, words and works. It's a connection that Sarah Kimball also recognized: "When through our spiritual nature we are in communion with God, we are drawing nearer and nearer to each other, and our words and works will blend more and more harmoniously," she explained ("Sixth," 251). Her ultimate goal was the refinement of that interaction, both in spirit and in practice, between the individual woman, her community, and her God.

The Prophet Joseph Smith once promised Sarah Kimball that her name would be "handed down in honorable remembrance from generation to generation" (Kimball, "Auto-Biography," 51). A few days after her death, the *Woman's Exponent* printed a tribute to Kimball which advised: "[T]he younger generation should not pass by such notable examples as her life affords. Her name and life should be perpetuated in the memory of every young man and woman in Zion" (Wells, "President," 78). A close rhetorical analysis of Kimball's life, words, and works provides some significant insight into a remarkable woman acting in an intriguingly unique historical role.

A REPRESENTATIVE WOMAN

Late in Kimball's life, Elder George Q. Cannon wrote a short message in her autograph book: "What an amount of interesting history you have helped to make. Now you stand venerable in appearance, your head silvered, if not by age, at least by the trials you have endured, in an important station and as a representative woman among your sex" (qtd. in Derr, 17). Kimball was also considered by her contemporary historians to be one of the "Representative Women of Deseret." They described Kimball as a "true Yankee type," of Puritanical deportment and "a little cold in her manner," concise in her language, with an incisive voice and with a "decidedly positive manner that some might construe as aggressive" (Wells, "LDS Women," 1). And yet she was widely respected and admired for her championing of woman's rights, as well as for her "unbounded charity and motherly care" of the needy and unfortunate, both in and outside of her own community (Wells, "President," 78).

The rhetorical concept of *enactment* helps explain Kimball's effectiveness as a public speaker and social reformer. Enactment is in force "when the speaker herself is proof of her argument and incarnates her message":

> Kohrs Campbell in *The Rhetorical Act* stated that "enactment is powerful evidence because members of the audience see and hear the evidence for themselves, directly. The proof is particularly vivid—it is alive in front of them!" (Qtd. Linkugel and Solomon, xiii)

If her life's work reflects the same message as her words, then the rhetor's biographical history can be read as a creative text, as much as can any of her public oratory. Kimball lived a life devoted to the principles she espoused, religiously and politically.

Sarah Melissa Granger was born in 1818 in Phelps, New York—a small town midway between Palmyra and Seneca Falls, which, as one of her biographers points out, was "a fortuitously appropriate beginning for a woman so committed to the gospel restored by Joseph Smith, Jr., and the principle of the equality of the sexes" Derr 3). The daughter of a licensed Methodist preacher who converted to Mormonism, young Sarah was encouraged and trained in both spiritual and intellectual inquiry; as a teenager in Kirtland, Ohio, she was one of the few women to attend the School of the Prophets (Derr, 4).

It was in her home in Nauvoo, Illinois, after her marriage to local Gentile merchant Hiram Kimball, that the first steps were taken toward organizing Latter-day Saint women into a service society, which soon led to the Church's officially organized Female Relief Society. Sarah Kimball's commitment to women's education and activism were lifelong; later in life she "urged the inclusion of substantive courses of study in her ward Relief Society, delivered strong addresses expounding doctrine, and spoke in tongues" (Richards, 784).

After emigrating to Utah, Sarah Kimball supported her family by teaching school under what she termed "difficult circumstances" when her husband suffered from ill health and serious financial setbacks. She was widowed in 1863 when Hiram, who had in the meantime joined the Church, was killed in a steamship explosion en route to a mission in the Sandwich Islands. By that time Kimball's Relief Society leadership had already been established, and her public career would last the rest of her life as a single woman in Deseret.

"President Mrs. Kimball," as she was often called, told her Relief Society sisters in one meeting that "the liberal shall be blessed" (qtd. in Derr, 17). We can see that Kimball's liberality included not only intellectual openmindedness and political concerns, but spiritual and humanitarian concerns as well. Emmeline Wells, editor of the *Woman's Exponent,* notes Kimball's years of Church and community service:

> [S]he has been . . . one of the most able presidents and indefatigable workers in the cause of all Zion. Perhaps there was no more judicious economizer of means, yet withal liberal in bestowing to the needy and unfortunate, than she has been. Her own ward can testify to her good works, her unbounded charity and motherly care of the sick and afflicted. . . . Everywhere her works testify of her . . . (Wells, "President," 78)

THE KIMBALL RHETORIC

Kimball, exposed early in life to the oratorical traditions of Methodist and Mormon preachers (she was particularly fond of the sermons of Orson and Parley Pratt), developed her own powerful voice as a communicator. Emmeline Wells knew Kimball to be "original and independent in her ideas" and organized in her presentation: "In public measures her plans were well-matured before she presented them, and therefore the more convincing." Wells further remembers:

> She was a very good public speaker concise in language and expression, used as few words as possible to convey her meaning and invariably handled her subjects well. . . . She was a woman one liked to talk with even if one could not always coincide with her views, and one was pretty sure to learn something by conversation with her. Even if one was worsted in an argument, she was certainly well worth listening to, and excellent in debate. ("LDS Women," 2)

Wells continues:

> Sister Kimball was methodical and practical generally, but some of her writings on philosophical and spiritual subjects were rather extraordinary and although in speaking she was clear and comprehensive, yet in her writings she was abtruse and inclined to be mystical. . . . She was really an advanced thinker and fond of soaring upward to sublime heights. (2)

On one of her political delegations to New York City, Kimball wrote a letter back to her Relief Society sisters in Utah mentioning a compliment recently paid to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton, the American suffragist, was praised by an English clergyman who described her as "both a born preacher and prophet." Kimball herself would later be favorably compared with Stanton, and the concept of prophecy is a helpful one in examining historical instances of women's rhetoric. There are similarities among the passionate appeals of women who argue for the chance not only to speak but to be heard. Notably, they often adopt what can be considered as a rhetoric of prophecy.

PROPHECY AS RHETORICAL DISCOURSE

Enlightenment-era feminist Margaret Fell had characterized the prophet as "the woman speaking in public on matters of moral concern" (Bizzell and Herzberg, 673). Many nineteenth-century women rhetors adopted a similar prophetic stance. Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Sarah Grimke, for example, all drew on their Quaker backgrounds to claim a woman's right to preach in public. Suffragist Anna Howard Shaw was the nation's first female licensed Methodist minister. In the 1830s, abolitionist Sarah Grimke argued that women have as much claim to prophecy as men have, and her definition of prophecy is one that can guide our examination of Kimball's rhetoric:

> We attach to the word prophecy, the exclusive meaning of foretelling future events, but this is certainly a mistake; for the apostle Paul defines it to be "speaking to edification, exhortation and comfort." And there appears no possible reason, why women should not do this as well as men. (Qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg, 692)

Add to these definitions the references made by other nineteenth-century activists: both Jane Addams and Margaret Fuller drew on their classical education to identify with the "intuitive Trojan prophet" Cassandra; Addams compared the contemporary state of women to Cassandra's tragedy, "always to be in the right, and always to be disbelieved" (Peaden, 187).

Kimball's politics and social activism were never separated from religion. She believed that with the organization of the Relief Society, women worldwide were entering a changing public and moral sphere. In an 1892 political leaflet, Kimball asserted that "the sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid on the 17th of March, 1842" (qtd. in Derr, 4), when the Church's women were organized.

Of course, the discussion is complicated by the fact that though the Prophet Joseph Smith said that he "turned the key to women" in the name of the Lord, the Female Relief Society was fashioned after the pattern of and under the direction of the male priesthood. Early Mormon "woman's rights" women were deferential to their patriarchal leaders, critical of "radical" feminist movements which undermined a mother's responsibility to her home and children. At the same time, however, they were outspoken in their beliefs in the equality and partnership of the sexes and firm in their conviction that expanded women's roles from church to state would be beneficial to humanity. Frequently, they used the pulpit to reach the public.

During the nineteenth century, sermonic oratory was considered among the greatest agents of social change. Clergyman Austin Phelps observed that the orthodox preacher

> preaches a system of truth which in its practical relations is correlative with all forms of human life, and with history through all time. Its genius is that of practical agitation and change. It is transforming, it is subversive, it is revolutionary. It cometh to send a sword on earth. Its destiny is to overturn and overturn and overturn. (qtd. in Hirst, 88)

Certainly this description can be applied to the rhetoric of the "woman's rights" prophets. Kimball, in championing social change, argued that "[e]ducation and agitation are our best weapons of warfare" in the advancement of women (*Exponent*, 15 Feb 1890).

Years later, Emmeline Wells recalled "one or two of [Kimball's] articles that made quite a sensation at the time; upon subjects with which women are now quite conversant" ("President," 2). As a pioneer in the suffrage movement, Kimball was often called upon to take the lead in addressing what she herself referred to as "sensational subjects." One particularly interesting occasion was a 13 January 1870 mass meeting to protest the proposed Congressional Cullom Anti-Polygamy Bill. The mass protest—the idea for which had originated in Kimball's Fifteenth Ward Relief Society meeting the week earlier—drew more than 5,000 women to the old tabernacle, "notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather," as the *Deseret News* reported. (The handful of men present were invited members of the press, including a correspondent from the *New York Herald*.) At the motion of Eliza R. Snow, Kimball was elected president of the assembly and rose to address the crowd with a few short remarks:

> We are to speak in relation to the government and institutions under which we live. She would ask, Have we transgressed any law of the United States? [Loud "no" from the audience.] Then why are we here to-day? We have been driven from place to place, and wherefore? Simply for believing and practicing the counsels of God, as contained in the gospel of heaven. The object of this meeting is to consider the justice of a bill now before the Congress of the United States. We are not here to advocate woman's rights, but man's rights. The bill in question would not only deprive our fathers, husbands and brothers, of enjoying the privileges bequeathed to citizens of the United States, but it would deprive us, as women, of the privilege of selecting our husbands; and against this we unqualifiedly protest. (Qtd. in Tullidge, 380)

In this unique rhetorical situation, Kimball's argument shows her mastery of the appropriate discourse. She obviously knows her audience well and purposefully includes them in the conversation by inviting their verbal response. Working toward agitation, she appeals not only the political ramifications of the proposed bill; but more importantly, she raises the religious conscience of the group by reminding them that the life-style being threatened is one of obedience to the counsel of their God. Significantly, Kimball notes that she is advocating "not woman's rights, but man's rights"; she chooses not to further complicate the issue with the problem of female suffrage, which was also currently in debate. She does, however, note that while a Congressional bill could deprive the men of their Constitutional privileges, the women would be deprived of an even more basic right—that of choosing their own husbands. Her outspokenness on this issue is even more interesting considering the fact that Kimball was never involved in a polygamous marriage. In fact, she herself reports that when the Prophet Joseph Smith revealed the doctrine to her, she told him "to go and teach it [to] someone else" ("Auto-Biography," 51).

Just a month after this mass meeting, Utah women were granted full suffrage by the territorial legislature, with the approval of the acting non-Mormon governor. One week later (19 February 1870) the minutes of the Fifteenth Ward Female Relief Society meeting record these remarks:

> Mrs. Sarah M. Kimball said she had waited patiently a long time, and now that we were granted the right of suffrage, she would openly declare herself a woman's rights woman, and called upon those who would do so to back her up, whereupon many manifested their approval. She said her experience in life had been different from that of many. She had moved in all grades of society; had been both rich and poor; had always seen much good and intelligence in woman. The interests of man and woman cannot be separated; for the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord. She spoke of the foolish custom which deprived the mother of having control over her sons at a certain age; said she saw the foreshadowing of a brighter day in this respect in the future. She said she had entertained ideas that appeared wild, which she thought would yet be considered woman's rights; spoke of the remarks made by Brother Rockwood, lately, that women would have as much prejudice to overcome, in occupying certain positions, as men would in granting them, and concluded by declaring that woman was the helpmate of man in every department of life. (Fifteenth)

Her timing was impeccable. Now justified by legislation and the apparent approval of religious leaders, Kimball publicly rejoices in declaring herself "a woman's rights woman." Again, she encourages verbal participation from her audience—a technique which prompts immediate action and both creates and acknowledges a community of like-minded activists. In an especially prophetic moment in this passage, Kimball predicts further rights for women in the future (though we're left to wonder about the particulars) while noting that there were still prejudices for both sexes to overcome.

Many of Kimball's sermons focused on equality of esteem for men and women, and she also taught of the ultimate and divine equality of "the Father and Mother God." The address Kimball wrote to be read at the Triennial Council of Women in Washington, D.C., in 1895, was titled "Our Sixth Sense, or the Sense of Spiritual Understanding." (See Appendix.) In the address Kimball insisted that the spiritual sense she was discussing was "that capacity of mind in which woman is pre-eminently fitted to excel." A sample passage outlines her belief in eternal, unlimited intellectual potential:

> They that seek, by faith and earnest prayer, find the light that leads to the golden gate. They that knock with study and faith's assurance, have the narrow way opened to them, and are received into communion with the Infinite Father and Mother, are permitted to enter hallowed mansions to attend the school of the Prophets, and, by advancing steps to reach the school of the Gods, where they learn the processes by which worlds are organized . . . the uses for which worlds are called into existence; the manner in which they are controlled, and the laws of progression by which all beings and animate things are perfected, and glorified in their respective spheres. (251)

Although it was meant to be delivered as a speech, this poetic text has more of the "mystical" quality which Emmeline Wells ascribed to Kimball's writings on philosophical and spiritual subjects. Certainly this is one occasion where we see her fondness for "soaring upward to sublime heights."

In another example of a written "literary" speech, Kimball draws even more heavily on the prophetic rhetoric by adopting a scriptural tone and drawing scriptural parallels. For Presiding

Bishop Edward Hunter's eighty-sixth birthday party, Kimball composed an address in his honor, praising his "long and useful life, which has been devoted to God and humanity" after the pattern of the sacred tradition:

> Like Adam, you have been a granger, a tiller of the soil, earning your bread by the sweat of your brow.
>
> Like Abraham, you have tended the flocks of the field; like him you have taught righteousness and are an honored leader among the children of promise.
>
> You have your probation in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather His obedient children into one grand harmonious family, where each, understanding correct principles, will be self-governing, and peace will reign in all the borders. The members of this family may enter the divine presence of the Father and Mother God with the scales of their mortal eyes unclasped and their perceptions revivified.
>
> Then worthy father, you will in fullness, reap the just reward of your husbandry, gather your flocks into fat pastures on your everlasting inheritance, and give dominion and power to the righteous of your own house, subordinate to the eternal scepter which through faithfulness you have received by promises as sacred as those made to Abraham.
>
> . . . It is our fervent desire that all present on this memorable occasion, may be counted worthy to participate with you, our illustrious father, in the glory and happiness of that "feast" of "feasts," until which time, to our much honored, Presiding Bishop in Zion, we mutually say "The Lord be with thee." ("Demonstration," 22)

Kimball's prophetic rhetoric draws on traditional sacred narrative, mixes in her own original ideas, makes use of sermonic power to enact social change, and establishes her right as a woman to speak on any matter in which she is "fitted to excel." Kimball exhorts, edifies, and comforts. Certainly she always recognizes the connection between belief and action, which places her in interaction with her community and with the divine—always the right position for a prophet to take. For Sarah Kimball, the purpose underlying her faith and her works was always clear. As she testifies:

> When through our spiritual nature we are in communion with God, we are drawing nearer and nearer to each other, and our words and works will blend more and more harmoniously, until earth's dutiful children, recognizing universal spiritual kinship, hail the peaceful millennial dawn, and participate in the triumphant reign of our God and His Christ. ("Sixth," 251)

APPENDIX

OUR SIXTH SENSE, OR THE SENSE OF SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

[Read at the Triennial Council of Women
in Washington February 21, 1895]

"Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,
Kindle a flame of sacred love,
In these cold hearts of ours."

It is proper on occasions like this, to consider such topics as shall be of the highest benefit to womankind; and to my mind, it is fitting to discuss here, that capacity of mind in which woman is preeminently fitted to excel. The contemplation of the sense of spiritual understanding first gives me a sense of my littleness and inability, then encourages me in the attempt to express a few thoughts on this absorbing theme.

This faculty, like our physical sense, is susceptible to cultivation. Its possibilities are limitless; it is the cause least understood; it is the divine of our nature; it brings to our understanding things not seen with the natural eye, or discerned by mortal mind; it extends our correspondences. With the eyes and senses of our physical self, we are in correspondence with our physical surroundings, with our spiritual eyes and senses awakened and cultivated, we come into communion with infinitude.

The sixth sense links mortal with immortal existence; it testifies in unmistakable language of the immortality of the soul. It educates, exalts, and refines those that heed its whisperings, and follow its guiding influence. This sense leads to blissful heights of superior understanding; teaches the secrets of ever-existent life; our relationship to the past, present, and future, and brings us into harmony with the infinite fountain of life and intelligence. It illumines the soul that cultivates it; purifies thoughts and actions; enlarges the sphere of comprehension, and exalts the aspirations. Its continued exercise brings its possessor nearer and nearer to the throne of the Almighty.

Those who answer the whisperings of this sense, are sympathetically drawn toward each other, as exemplified in the Religious Congress held in Chicago in 1893, where religious pilgrims and would-be reformers from all lands, and of all creeds, met and harmonized in a bond of love. This was notably true of the Woman's Department of the Memorable Congress.

The light of this sense has been foreshadowed in various ages of the world's history. In the ninteenth century, the search-light of Religion, Philosophy, and Science, have united in exploring an untrodden pathway toward the haven of light which is inextinguishable.

The legitimate exercise of spiritual power obtained through the operations of this sense, puts the individual in possession of keys of knowledge, and clothes him with additional responsibility relating to the enlightenment and elevation of the human family.

They that seek, by faith and earnest prayer, find the light that leads to the golden gate. They that knock with study and faith's assurance, have the narrow way opened to them, and are received into communion with the Infinite Father and Mother, are permitted to enter hallowed mansions to attend the school of the Prophets, and, by advancing steps to reach the school of the Gods, where they learn the processes by which worlds are organized, by the combining of eternal, intelligent, obedient elements; the uses for which worlds are called into existence; the manner in which they are controlled, and the laws of progression by which all beings and animate things are perfected, and glorified in their respective spheres.

When through our spiritual nature we are in communion with God, we are drawing nearer and nearer to each other, and our words and works will blend more and more harmoniously, until earth's dutiful children, recognizing universal spiritual kinship, hail the peaceful millennial dawn, and participate in the triumphant reign of our God and His Christ.

EXPECTATION

Of the advanced thinkers and diligent workers who compose the Woman's Triennial Council much is expected. Your labors of preparation have been arduous; the whisperings of this sense have disarmed opposition, and brought you to a large measure of victory. The thought wave of many a prayer is wafted to you as inspiration, and in reciprocal order the highest expression of your combined wisdom must radiate and inspire receptive souls in all the world, stimulating them to higher hopes, and stronger activities in the cause of more enlightened civilization, and a more perfect understanding of divine science, as revealed through our Sixth Sense, or the sense of spiritual understanding.

In closing, the writer, in loving sympathy, asks that increased spiritual light may illume the pathway of the various lines of good work represented in the Triennial Council.

SARAH M. KIMBALL
Salt Lake City, Utah
Feb. 1895

JANELLE HIGBEE is a freelance writer from Provo, Utah. This paper is drawn from her master's thesis research as a graduate student in English at Brigham Young University. This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

Works Cited

Bizzell, Patricia and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present.* Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's P, 1990.

Derr, Jill Mulvay. *"The Liberal Shall be Blessed": Sarah M. Kimball.* 1976; reprinted Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1981.

Fifteenth Ward, Riverside Stake. Relief Society Minutes, 1868-73. 19 Feb. 1870. Historical Department Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

Hirst, Russel. "The Sermon as Public Discourse: Austin Phelps and the Conservative Homiletic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century America." *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric*. Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, eds. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 78-109.

Jarratt, Susan. "Performing Feminisms, Histories, Rhetorics." *RSQ* 22 (Winter 1992): 1-5.

Kimball, Sarah M. "Auto-Biography." *Woman's Exponent* 12 (1 Sept. 1883): 51.

---. "Our Sixth Sense, or the Sense of Spiritual Understanding." *Woman's Exponent* 23 (15 April 1895): 251.

---. "Demonstration in Honor of Bishop Hunter." *Woman's Exponent* 8 (1 July 1879): 22.

Linkugel, Wil A., and Martha Solomon. *Anna Howard Shaw: Suffrage Orator and Social Reformer*. New York: Greenwood, 1991.

Lloyd-Jones, Richard. "Using the History of Rhetoric." *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*. Theresa Enos, ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993. 15-25.

Peaden, Catherine. "Jane Addams and the Social Rhetoric of Democracy." Clark and Halloran, 184-207.

Richards, Mary Stovall. "Sarah M. Kimball." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1991. 2:784-85.

Tullidge, Edward W. *The Women of Mormondom*. New York, 1877.

Wells, Emmeline B. "LDS Women of the Past." *Woman's Exponent* (1 and 15 June 1908): 1-3.

---. "President Sarah M. Kimball." *Woman's Exponent* 27 (15 Dec. 1898): 77-78.

A Voice Unheard: Reflections on the Poetry of Florence Bale

Eric Samuelsen

In 1992 my wife, Annette, was called as Relief Society president in our ward. Of the many issues with which she contended, I recall, one was of particular delicacy: what to do about Florence Bale.

Sister Bale was an elderly sister with health problems which made her rather difficult. She had served for many years as Relief Society chorister and made it plain that she regarded that calling as hers and would bitterly resent any attempt to replace her in it. And every Sunday, Sister Bale conducted music with a kind of ponderous grimness; a firm, relentless beat that turned every hymn somber and dark and slow.

I knew Sister Bale from my Sunday School class, though she rarely contributed. She sat stiffly and awkwardly on the piano bench in our classroom, her right arm in a brace. She always came late, I recall, walking in slowly and with great difficulty. She rarely smiled, and she presented altogether a most forbidding appearance.

We knew that Sister Bale also wrote poetry—it was one of the facts about her we substituted for truer fellowship. She wrote occasional poems for funerals and weddings, and other devotional works, which she read aloud in homemaking meeting from time to time and which she would also photocopy and hand out at ward functions. Annette saw no particular reason why that tradition shouldn't continue and so continued to make a place for Sister Bale's poetry in homemaking, although she herself never attended those sessions. Some of the older sisters in the ward liked Sister Bale's poetry, and I, from my lofty heights as a playwright and BYU professor assumed I knew the reason why—although I'd never read it. It was undoubtedly all icky Joyce Kilmeresque evocations of trees and small children, and other drecklich examples of Mormon sentimentality. In my own mind, on those rare occasions when my thoughts turned to Sister Bale, I identified her as "that old woman who writes bad poetry."

Our bishop, Brent Phillips, liked her. He visited her on a regular basis and said that she could be a delight to talk to. She'd had a very difficult life, he said, and although she was very ill and in great pain much of the time, she had a wonderful sense of humor and interesting insights about life. And he told me on more than one occasion that I should ask her if I could read her poetry. I don't know much about poetry, he'd say, but I think it's good. You may be surprised.

I never did. Of course, I remind myself that there's no particular reason I should have. I was never assigned to her as a home teacher, never had any contact with her outside of her attendance in my Sunday School class. She was a stranger to me, as were most of the older members of my ward. Brent Phillips was a kind and Christian soul, a man without guile or affectation and a wonderful bishop, one whom I admired excessively. But that didn't mean that his taste in poetry and mine would coincide. Besides, I thought, I'm sparing her. I know how humiliating it can be to have someone read something you've written that you know they don't like. How obviously forced their polite response can be. So I thought to spare Florence the burden of reading her work and spare me the embarrassment of having to respond to it. How considerate of me, I thought, to spare both of us.

A few weeks ago, Florence Bale died. I did not attend her funeral, but my wife did and said that, as we might have expected, they read some of her poetry. Her son had collected her poems, photocopied and bound them, and made the booklet available to anyone who wanted it. Annette brought the collection home, and a few days later, in an idle moment, I began leafing through it.

I am not a poet. I love poetry, and read it for pleasure, but I am not trained as a critic of poetry and make a point of never sharing my own weak verses with anyone. But I studied poetry when younger, and hung out with poets, and read Robin Skelton with friends, and was in writers' groups with poets. I do have some notions of what it means to be a poet, what the calling of a poet entails.

A poet, I believe, is someone deeply committed to both the art and the craft of that most demanding of literary forms. A poet is a keen observer of the world. A poet is restless and restive, inventive and unsatisfied. A poet takes her work seriously enough to revise and rework, craft, hone, construct. A poet sees the world clearly and communicates lived experience with spareness and precision. And a poet is ruthlessly honest, unafraid of ugliness and misery, willing to lay her own internal life out on the page, to invade her own privacy and expose her darkest secrets.

By all these definitions, and despite the fact that, as far as I know, she was never published in her lifetime, Florence Bale was a poet.

As I leafed through her book, the first poem to catch my attention was "My San Diego," a poem she wrote back in 1958. Florence's husband Ralph was a dental technician, and his job required him to move quite frequently. Florence greatly disliked moving and had a difficult time making friends. She always thought of herself as awkward and unattractive, and in fact wrote one of her most poignant poems about her high school reunion, with the haunting refrain "I was the quiet one, but I, too, was there." She was from Wyoming and hated large cities, yet she reached a kind of uneasy truce with San Diego.

MY SAN DIEGO

This teeming city
Holds a strange and gripping fascination
That weaves its mystic spell
Around the soul of such as I;
I, who have loved
The vast unhamperedness
And limitless expanse of high plateaus;
The crystal atmosphere
That lets the eye reach out and ever out,
And still perceive
More distant wonders.
I who have lived with loneliness,
And sought the ultimate fulfillment
In some secluded place, removed
From all the race of men.
Now here am I,
A finite fiber in the intricate design
That is a man-made empire;
A living, thriving monument
To man's creative mind
And industry.
Here a great city rises with the hills,
Spreading its varied geometric pattern
To the far horizon.
And where the land comes down
To meet the sea,
Mankind has followed,

Bringing his world of mechanized devices
To the water's edge.
Twilight lends enchantment to this scene
That blends the things of nature
And of man.
The sun is but a crimson memory
That silhouettes, in bold relief,
Intriguing structures
And the stately palms.
And as the night creeps upward to the sky
The bay becomes a liquid ebony,
Wearing a Jeweled circlet
Of many-colored lights;
While riding safe at anchor,
Great ships, like floating, twinkling gems,
Crown the harbor
Like a monarch's diadem.
Here, where the pace of living quickens
Like the pulsing of a giant heart;
Where white and ruby rivers flow
In undulating streams
Along the night-bound highways;
Where a myriad shining lights,
Like diamonds flung on velvet,
Sprinkle the far-flung hills;
Here, where pirouetting beacons search the sky,
And lead the wayward wings of man
To earth;
And where the sea
Is nature's challenge to the restlessness
Of man—
Like the mighty ships which,
Having sailed a long and lonely journey,
Set their course
For home and haven in this sheltered bay,
I, too, have journeyed long,
At last to find a different peace,
A strange new meaning,
In this fascinating harbor I call home—
My San Diego.

This is an early poem, from 1958, and it is not without its awkwardnesses. Sister Bale did love self-consciously romantic "poemy" phrases like "monarch's diadems" and "Jeweled circlets." But the imagery is clear and strong, and I love the feeling of surprise, the astonished wonder as this nature-loving outdoorsy Wyoming woman finds beauty in the evening lights of a city.

This sense of place, of longing to belong, is a theme in much of Florence's best work. A number of her early poems might be regarded as cries of protest as Ralph's job took him from city to city, from Medford, Oregon, to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to Provo to San Diego. On one occasion, Ralph's job required him to move twice in six weeks. She responded with a poem called "No Place Called Home."

NO PLACE CALLED HOME

There is no place called home. My hungry heart
Cries out in vain to linger for a while
Within some spot that I can call my own,
Where just the name of home brings forth a smile.
There is no place called home. There is no door
Beyond whose portal lies the end of hope,
There is no room whose all-embracing walls
Hold answered dreams and joy within their scope.
There is no trusted friend to wave a hand
And call a cheery greeting every day.
I have so little time to find a friend—
There is no home, there is no time to stay.
Along and strange, I walk along some street
Where other feet have trod for many years.
Where other voices laugh, and faces smile,
I wander, and find naught but lonely tears.
The road still reaches out for endless miles;
Relentlessly fate leads me ever there.
I've lost all hope of finding journey's end,
No longer do I find surcease in prayer.
I see no ray of hope. My hungry heart
Clings only to a shadow as I roam.
Despair within me chants its haunting song—
There is no rest; there is no place called home.

I love the honesty of this poem. It's a very early work, 1948, and again shows Sister Bale's occasional tendency towards florid language: "naught, surcease, portal." But the ending is achingly sad: "there is no rest, there is no place called home." Best of all, she resists the temptation to round the poem off with a neat little moral, a failing to which she was only occasionally prone.

Sister Bale was in fact aware of some of the flaws in her work and not above making fun of them. Here is one of the more charming of her lighter verses, written when a particularly obnoxious Relief Society president (not, I hasten to add, my wife) required the sisters of her ward to each write a poem. Although this is a very early work, 1944, I love the way Sister Bale parodies the conventions of romantic sentimentalism; I especially love the tough independence of the last stanza.

AS REQUESTED

You ask me to write a poem?
 Oh, dear, how shall I start?
What subject should I write upon?
 Do you like affairs of the heart?
I could wax in a mood romantic
 And write of a silvery moon
And even include a little boat
 On a very blue lagoon.
Or, if you are a lover of nature
 I could write of towering trees,
And the fragrance of lovely flowers,
 And the humming of honey bees.
Or I could be more playful
 And write of a capering cat,
Or a mischievous boy and a little dog,
 And pleasant things like that.
But then, you asked for a poem;
 And poems, I've understood,
Are works of art by the masters,
 And I'm sure I'm not that good.
So I'll just say I'm sorry,
 But a poet I'll never be;
And these few lines of simple verse
 Are the best you'll get from me.

This same spirit of tough independence but also rueful acknowledgement of weakness and inadequacy underlies another of her lighter verses, "Afterthought." But this time, it's not hard to sense a deeper, keener disappointment.

AFTERTHOUGHT

Now that the contest is over
And the prize to the winner has sped,
I pick up my pen, and remember
All the things I should have said—
All the phrases, wise and witty,
All the words that amuse and please;
The treasured scenes, word-painted,
That come to me now with ease.
And a wistful sigh escapes me
As I think of the context, done;
The fleeting glory I dreamed of,
And the prize I might have won!

Although light verse makes up a surprisingly large part of her collection, her serious poetry is, I think, stronger. It makes better use of her power of observation. Surprising images crop up everywhere; she notices an abandoned child's teddy bear on the verge of a highway, or the way a child sits and steers a cardboard box as if it's a limousine. A San Diego fog rolls in and dusk "tugs it up like a coverlet." Nearly every poem in her collection has an image or an observation that rings true. I like this little gem, from 1974.

GIRL IN THE RAIN

A drenching summer rain came down,
And from the haven of my home
I watched its pelting drops
Raise tiny water spouts upon the street.
Then, barefoot, unconcerned
As though there were no rain,
She walked, her long hair dripping,
A closed umbrella
Swinging in her hand.

Florence Bale had her own voice, as unmistakable and distinctive as a Minerva Teichert painting. Her voice is a strong one, resolute and unapologetic. I admire the strength of conviction, for example, of a poem that in some ways is one of the weaker in the collection. It's called "Vapor Trail."

VAPOR TRAIL

A vapor trail across the sky
Behind a bomber, flying high,
Will always give me pause to say
A prayer for freedom for this day.
A prayer of thanks that these great wings
That fly with men, and bombs, and things,
Are symbols of the strength and power
That guard our nature every hour.
And I can live with little fear
That war will ever reach us here,
As long as mighty bombers fly
On peaceful missions through the sky.

I couldn't help but smile when I read this poem, though my own politics are such that I don't much admire the sentiment. But "Vapor Trail" is unvarnished Florence Bale, staunchly Republican, unapologetically patriotic, and unafraid to say so.

That same strength of conviction is so characteristic of what I believe are the strongest poems in her collection, her religious poetry. Florence Bale was a widow for thirty-four years and spent much of her life alone. But for her, solitude was something to embrace, not fear.

SOLITUDE

Solitude
Is like a mountain:
Towering, silent, and immovable,
Yet giving strength
To one who stands at its feet.
Solitude inspires contemplation
Of self, of God,
And all the works that each has done.
Solitude
Is a haunting, constant thing,
And dwells alike
In lonely places and the teeming city
Undaunted by stillness
Or confusion.
Solitude heals the mind
And restores the soul
To God.

Her faith in God was put to its sternest test in September 1965 when her beloved Ralph passed away. The aching loneliness of her life without him, the numbness and emotional exhaustion of grieving found a voice in this work, "The Empty Spring."

THE EMPTY SPRING

The springtime comes again;
And all the earth
Begins to pulse and quiver
With the newness of rebirth.
The tree buds swell
And show the first faint tinges
Of their promised green.
Flowers brave the impetuous elements
To spread abroad with eagerness
The rapturous color-riot of their blooms.
But oh, my love, though beauty
Flings itself abroad in such abundant measure,
My heart but half perceives
The glory of the scene.
Mine eyes alone behold the beauties
That once we shared, and felt, as one,
The grace and goodness of our God,
Who gave us birth, our love and all
The glories of creation in which to know
The ecstasies of our fulfillment.
The springtime comes again;
But not for me alone, my love.
But not for me.

A year later, it was still difficult for her to find peace. But the brutal loneliness of her life as a widow, while still expressed with a raw, naked clarity, leads to, if not peace, at least the hope of peace to come. In this poem, as in so many, we see Sister Bale struggle to find some meaning in her husband's death. And as she does so, her childhood struggles with self-esteem, with abusive parents, and with the scarring taunts of schoolmates all seem to have resurfaced. With Ralph, she had found someone who valued her and built her up. But then he too had been taken from her. Her poems become prayers, meditations to God pleading for understanding and forgiveness.

THE BITTER CUP

The bitter, crushing tide returns—
The searing word,
The ridicule, the scorn
That tried my soul
Through long, unhappy years.
A moment's peace I found
In answer
To my fervent plea.
Perhaps I grasped too eagerly
For hope and light
And human kindness.
Can it be
That I have not yet learned
The way of life, the height of truth,
The meaning of humility
That I must learn
Before the bitter cup of scorn
May be removed?
If this be so,
Almighty God, Who knowest all
And teachest naught but truth,
Teach me Thy greatest lesson
In humility;
That I may walk among all men,
My head held high,
But not with vanity;
My soul, not withered, but alive,
And be at peace.

AND PEACE SHALL COME

Another year has worn away
And still the wound within my heart
Bleeds on.
New home, new scene, new life
Have failed to work, for me,
Their healing art.
The lonely hours drag on,
Becoming lonely days
And nights,
Then weeks and months.
How can I bear the thought
Of endless years, like this,
Of emptiness, unceasing pain,
The hollow struggle with existence
That refuses to be filled
With life and meaning?
Where can I turn,
What can I do that will bring back
The fullness
Of the life I knew?
Where can I find the things
That will replace
The joys I lost?
What is the answer,
Where the pinnacle of meaning
I must scale
Before I learn
What more life holds for me?
O God, please give me strength
To live
The empty days and nights,
The ceaseless drone
Of meaningless existence.
Help me find the way
To purpose and fulfillment

Touch thou my misted eyes, that I may see
The path that leads again to life
Abundant and replete.
Give me a star to follow
And a light along my way.
Help me find peace,
And not lose sight
Of all Thy mercies and Thy grace;
Nor yet forget the monument

That I must build.
Help me remember that all wounds
Are healed with time,
And mine, with all the rest.
Shall pass away.
Be Thou my guide and strength,
And peace shall surely come again,
And life go on
By thine appointed way.
Be patient, O my soul,
And peace shall come.

But peace was difficult to achieve. Perhaps my favorite of her poems is also, perhaps the bitterest, the most savage. It's a Christmas poem, and it has the chill and bite of a December storm.

TURN AWAY

Turn your heart away from sights and
sounds
That tell of Christmas.
Still the music, dim the lights,
Look not at tinsel-laden trees.
And pay no heed to children's joyful
shouts,
Nor see the looks of trust and faith
And pure anticipation in their eyes.
It is for them,
This day of warmth and joy and sharing
And of answered dreams.
For them, and for their elders, who,
In homes intact and filled with love
And bonds of understanding,
Own yet the oneness of two souls,
Enlarged to many,
That brings fulfillment
To the promise of this day.
'Tis not for one, alone, bereft,
For whom the shattered bonds of life
Hold naught but loneliness
And endless, empty days.
'Tis not for one with silvered locks,
Outside the pale of family ties
And human warmth and kindness.
On Bethlehem's great night
The town closed tight its doors
To her who there brought forth
The Son of God.
Still so today,
The world shuts out the stranger and the
lone,
And hugs its pleasures close
In tight, sequestered circles.
So turn away your heart. Remember not
That "peace on earth, good will to men"
was sung
By angels on that night so long ago.
Blot out the scene. This joy is not for you.
Then see it not, nor hear.
But turn away.

I cannot leave Sister Bale's work, however, on so angry a note. Ultimately, Florence Bale did find that peace. I love the quiet dignity of this very late work.

THE TIME OF RIPENING

There is a touch of autumn in the air;
The days are cool, the sky is overcast,
There is a quiver in the earth,
Presaging colder days to come.
The rain that falls is not as soft and warm
As in the summer days now gone.
The time of ripening is here,
When field and orchard yield their precious
store
To fill the barns and cellars with their wealth
Against the coming of the winter's cold.
Once more God's bounteous harvest fills the
land
And fills our hearts with deepest gratitude
For all the many blessings that are ours;
For all God's great creations; for his love
And wisdom that provide so lavishly
For all the wants and needs of Man.

Then let our hearts be full with praise
And thankfulness for this, God's grand design,

That we may come to earth and share
The richness of all things his hands have
made;
And fill the vaulted skies with joy, that we
May know again this time of ripening.

Florence Bale was a difficult woman. For our Relief Society, she was something of a problem, and she could be a trial. She was also a poet. Her work was never published in her lifetime and never, as far as I know, read outside the confines of her ward and family. And yet every poem in her collection was carefully honed and crafted; every poem bears the unmistakable mark of hours of painstaking labor. She had a keen eye for detail, and a voice all her own, and above all, she was honest. She told the truth, about herself, about her experiences, and, finally, about what it all came to mean to her. In every sense of the word, Florence Bale was an artist. I cannot begin to understand the self-discipline and courage it took to expend that much energy and work that hard for so little earthly reward.

I suspect that there may be many Florence Bales among us. Until her apotheosis as general Relief Society President, Eliza R. Snow was a Florence Bale, a handy dispenser of occasional verse, her work known only to friends and neighbors. I mentioned Minerva Teichert —in many ways she was a Florence Bale. I have a grandfather, Ragnar Samuelsen, who once, as a Norwegian seaman on shore leave, challenged and beat a grand master in chess. Ragnar Samuelsen was in many ways a Florence Bale, a man of extraordinary skill and talent, who never received an ounce of encouragement or a moment of training. How can we honor, how can we acknowledge the fortitude, the valor, of the Florence Bales in our midst? How can we seek them out, and how can we, without hypocrisy or guile, give their work what it, above all, deserves: an audience, a knowledgeable, appreciative audience?

And now, my paper has become a sermon, and my tribute, a diatribe. Let me instead conclude with one last poem, a very short one.

SLIPS (REJECTION)

"There's many a slip
'Twixt the cup and the lip"
Wrote a poet in days of yore;
But the lines from my pen
Which are sent back again
Will account for a great many more.

Let the grim determination of that last great line sum up Florence's Bale's achievement. She never gave up, and she never quit, and she never stopped being an artist. I honor her now, in death, as I should have while she was living. May God bless you today, Florence Bale, and above all, may He find time to read your poetry.

ERIC SAMUELSEN teaches in the Theatre and Film Department at Brigham Young University. This paper was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

"Let Your Light So Shine": Dean Hughes and the Mormonisms in His Fiction

Gabi Kupitz

While it may be difficult to publish a work for children and young adults when religious references are used, the task is not impossible and, in today's publishing climate, *may* even be coming into vogue.

In the fall of 1995, while on a research blitz in Germany, I visited the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (International Youth Library) in Munich. Located in a converted former hunting lodge, it is not visible from the street. No, one must go through the hedge, over the wooden bridge spanning a small stream, through crunchy autumn leaves covering a cobblestone walk, and through a gate tower to reach this amazing treasure. The library actively collects and loans literature for children and young adults from all corners of the world. Consequently, the IYL is a treasure trove for the researcher.

Out of curiosity, I asked Martha Baker, my guide and the English Section Supervisor of the library, to conduct an on-line search for a "Utah" author. I had contacted Ms. Baker prior to my visit and had promised to bring some "Utah" books with me. Fortuitously, just prior to my departure for Germany, three Utah authors—Ann Edwards Cannon, Louise Plummer, and Margaret Rostkowski—had participated on an "Evening with the Authors and Illustrators" panel sponsored by BYU's Harold B. Lee Library. They graciously signed the books I had purchased for presentation to the International Youth Library. So here I was at the IYL with three signed books by Utah authors in hand while Martha conducted her on-line search. As a cataloger, I wondered which searching term she would use. Martha typed in the word "Utah" and nothing happened. Stumped, Martha asked for specific authors. The first name to flash into my mind was Dean Hughes so Martha typed in Hughes Dean and was rewarded with two titles: *Nutty's Ghost* (Atheneum, 1993) and *End of the Race* (Atheneum, 1993). I couldn't believe it. Here I was, a quarter of a world away from Utah, and Dean Hughes's books were somewhere on these library grounds.

Dean Hughes is a fixture in literature for children and young adults. According to the inside back cover of *Team Picture* (Atheneum, 1996; Aladdin Paperbacks, March 1998), "Dean Hughes has published more than sixty books for children and young adults, including series books about Nutty and his friends." Hughes's books are generally good reads that win over parents as well as children because he tells a good story without slogging around in objectionable materials. These are books that one can recommend to children. I say this not to be demeaning. In my profession, censorship is not kindly looked upon. However, many of today's stories for children, and especially young adults, have crossed the line. That is, they portray swearing, sex, and violence as everyday norms.

Zena Sutherland, respected book reviewer for *Saturday Review* and the *Chicago Tribune* as well as former editor of the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* was recently interviewed by Beverly Goldberg, Senior Editor at the American Library Association's *American Libraries*. In the course of the interview, which dealt with literature for children and Sutherland's long and distinguished career in that field, Goldberg asked, "What 'almost anything' shouldn't they read?" Sutherland responded, "Books with a lot of violence and gore, or explicit sex. That's my line in the sand. That would be more harmful than series books like Nancy Drew, which fail to give children an appreciation of good literature" (Sutherland, 37-38).

Raw language and graphic descriptions of sexual assault, sexual encounters, and alternative life-styles abound in books for children and young adults. For example, in Francesca Lia Block's *Girl Goddess #9*, a collection of nine stories published in 1996 by HarperCollins which garnered a *Kirkus* starred review and a *School Library Journal* starred review and which was a *School Library Journal* best book, Tuck Budd, the junior-high protagonist of "Dragons in Manhattan," feels the urge to search for her biological father. She currently lives in New York City with two mothers who sleep in the same bed and kiss. To Tuck, it is obvious that her two mothers could not have biologically produced a child. Tuck, a brash street-wise child, takes her search to California where she eventually learns that her second mother is actually her biological father. The story is well written and full of surprises, as you might well imagine, with few of the graphic details left to the imagination.

In the 1997 horror thriller *Blood and Chocolate* by Annette Curtis Klause, published by Delacorte Press, sixteen-year-old Vivian, a beautiful and bright but distracted high school student by day, is a werewolf at night. Vivian loses her father in a fire while he tries to protect the pack. She then falls in love with a fellow high school student. Because she loves and trusts him, she feels compelled to be totally honest and literally "bare all" at which point he shrieks in terror! Vivian realizes that she is best accepted by those of her own kind who enjoy reveling in raw, animal-like sex and violence graphically illuminated in some 264 pages. Well-written and a definite page turner, the novel garnered the *School Library Journal* Best Books distinction and has a *School Library Journal* starred review.

To add another voice to the seven or so national review sources covering literature for children and young adults (*School Library Journal, Booklist, Kirkus Reviews, Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, Publishers Weekly, Horn Book,* and the *New York Times Book Review)*, the Lee Library, in concert with the Department of Teacher Education (previously the Department of Elementary Education) and the Department of Theatre and Media Arts (previously the Department of Theatre and Film), reviews books and plays for children and young adults regularly. Interested individuals—parents, students, professors, librarians (academic, school, and public)—meet monthly to discuss current titles and trends. They also write reviews which are published in *Children's Book and Play Review (CBPR)*, published five times a year and available by subscription for hardcover copy and/or on-line access. Subscription inquiries and other correspondence can be sent to Marsha D. Broadway, Managing Editor, *Children's Book and Play Review*, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602-6887 or marsha_broadway@byu.edu, or (801) 378-6685. CBPR is sent to publishers and to subscribing individuals and institutions, some as far away as Russia.

Recently, while perusing Martha Southgate's 1997 young adult novel *Another Way to Dance,* I thought again of Dean Hughes and his fiction for children and young adults. Southgate's heroine is fourteen-year-old Vicki Harris, who is realizing her dream of attending the prestigious School of American Ballet in New York City. While in New York City, Vicki hopes to bump into her idol: Mikhail Nikolaievich Baryshnikov, or "Misha," as many in the dance business know him. Vicki finds the School of American Ballet extremely demanding and Misha very self-absorbed. Disillusioned by her fantasy man, Vicki comes back to earth and accepts a Sunday date with sixteen year-old Michael, who works at the nearby Wendy's restaurant where Vicki regularly nibbles on lo-cal/no-cal green salads. The first week, they go to Central Park. The next Sunday, Michael asks Vicki to be ready early and to dress up.

Vicki's New York City guardian, "Aunt" Hannah, opens the apartment door to Michael and exclaims, "My goodness, don't you look nice. Where are you off to?" (85). Michael looked "a little sheepish" as he politely replied, "Church first. My mom and I go to Abyssinian uptown. Then I was just going to show Vicki around my neighborhood" (85).

Vicki hasn't been to church in years and thinks out loud that she may be Episcopalian. At church, Michael introduces Vicki to his mother, a cheerful and delightful lady. The service is rather lengthy, but Vicki is strongly impressed by the minister's emphasis "to stand up for yourself and not let anybody make you feel ashamed" (87). Vicki is also electrified and energized by the choir. She assures Michael's mother that she has very much enjoyed the service.

This new book received an American Library Association Young Adult award. Vicki's creator, like Vicki, is African American. *Another Way to Dance* is her first novel.

When I read Southgate's book, I wondered which of our Utah authors would be as brave—brave enough not only to set his or her story in Utah but to portray real Utah people as Southgate did in portraying New York City residents. What an innovative concept: Not all New York City dwellers are engaged in alternative lifestyles! Nor do all of them, with tons of money and minus children, shop at Saks Fifth Avenue or spend every Sunday strolling through Central Park with a spoiled dog on a leash. No, Southgate incorporates some very real people—not werewolves or transsexuals but church-goers who can carry on conversations without gutter talk and who lead relatively normal, yet eventful lives. Could a Utah author portray Utah characters as not all, but certainly many, Utah residents behave? Again, as in the International Youth Library query, one of the first names to fit that description is Dean Hughes.

In Hughes's *Lucky* books, Lucky and his widowed father adventure through the entire country. Lucky's father works for an insurance company, appraising the costs of natural and manmade disasters and their affects on policy holders. Lucky is very outgoing and not ashamed to let anyone know that he is a Mormon. Because the *Lucky* series is published by Deseret Book, such investigation into the Mormon lifestyle is welcome and expected. Death, dating, remarriage, race relations, and honesty are just a few of the issues Lucky and his father explore within a Latter-day Saint context. In a quick search of academic libraries with which BYU is partnered, *Lucky* books can be found at several institutions including Princeton University and the Library of Congress.

Hughes credits "Jim Metz's fourth-grade class 1986-87" (*Lucky's Crash Landing*, Preface) for help in fermenting the idea for the *Lucky* books. Hughes then names all thirty-five fourth-graders in his acknowledgments—a measure of gratitude and assurance that *Lucky* books will be read by these children's children and numerous relatives and friends.

Hughes's fiction published on the East Coast lacks the same vibrant descriptions of Mormon life as his works published by Deseret Book. *Switching Tracks*, published in 1982 by Atheneum, makes no explicit mention of anything Mormon. However, it, like other of Hughes's books, contains allusions to religion. Mark, a junior high school student, must endure the taunts of the bullies who are part of the school and the daily school bus ride home. Lonely in his fatherless world, Mark reluctantly accepts the friendship of Willard, an elderly neighbor. At first, Mark helps Willard put his hobby train back on track. In exchange, Willard pays Mark a small wage which Mark promptly spends at the neighborhood arcade.

> The Space Invaders game was another natural symbol for a boy trying to get away from himself. The little attackers would march incessantly forward, invading Mark's space, but he could handle them expertly. He knew how to eliminate them systematically, taking control. He was not so effective with the space invaders on the bus, at school, or in his home. But at the arcade he was master. (Hughes and Kuznets, 161)

To pull Mark out of his unhappy world, Willard plies him with questions. On one occasion, Mark's beautiful widowed mother made him and his younger brother accompany her on a picnic with a man she was dating. In a foul mood afterward, Mark goes to see Willard who was sitting "in an old chair that had stuffing coming out along the arms, and he had the Sunday paper strewn around on the floor by his feet" (*Switching Tracks*, 57). Mark tells Willard about the despised picnic, and Willard asks, "Doesn't your mother make you go to church on Sunday?' (*Switching Tracks*, 58). They banter back and forth about the value of religion and the possible existence of heaven. Quoting one of his railroad days buddies, old Willard says: "I don't mind the preaching so much, and I can even put up with sitting on that old bench, but my wife thinks I ought to leave that church and go out and *do* all that stuff he preaches about—that's what gets my goat" (59-60). Shortly thereafter, Mark sees his dead father in a dream (61), which deeply disturbs him.

These passages infuse the novel with camouflaged Mormonisms: the arcade characters, Satan's little imps, which can be controlled in a controlled environment; Willard's questions about going to church; references to Sunday; dreams with familial subjects and meanings; and the "test" of real life that comes at school and on the daily bus rides. Although they are subtle and generically Christian rather than Mormon, they give the reader the jolt of encountering something familiar—identifiers to similar life experiences.

In *Millie Willenheimer and the Chestnut Corporation* (Atheneum, 1983), Millie, who tries her hand at becoming a female entrepreneur extraordinaire, jests with her mother about growing up:

> Mom began laughing. "I can just see you with fifteen kids, Millie."
>
> "Yeah, me too. All lined up with their little Sunday dresses and suits on, with their hair combed nice . . ." (31).

As Millie digs herself deeper into debt, she holds a meeting of her business partners. "Bradley was looking at the floor and grasping his hands together. He might have been praying" (89). As Millie learns about honesty in business, she receives insights familiar to those of Judeo-Christians, including Latter-day Saints, who visualize God as a judge: "She had a picture of herself in her mind standing before Mr. Brinker who was sitting in a great throne, and he was just shaking his head and looking very disappointed" (122).

When Millie confesses all of her business blunders and seeks to set things right with her mother by defending her father's actions in bailing her out of her financial mess, Millie's mother expresses confidence in her husband by maintaining: "When he comes right down to the moment of truth, he'll choose what's right" (124)—a slight variation on "choose the right," a familiar Mormonism.

But Hughes's references to Sunday papers, attending church on Sunday, night dreams of departed ancestors, and choosing the right are all part of the Mormon experience(s) as well as the experiences, whole or in part, of many others in the world, be they editors, publishers, or the reading public. Thus, these Sunday activities are not blatant examples of Mormonism and are therefore acceptable in print.

Even more subtle references appear in *Team Picture* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1996; Aladdin Paperbacks, March 1998), the sequel to *Family Pose. Team Picture* has been honored with a *School Library Journal* starred review (*SLJ*, Nov. '96), a *Booklist* starred review (*Booklist*, Nov. 15, 1996, 584) and a review in *Horn Book Magazine* (Jan./Feb. 1997, 58).

In *Team Picture*, David, a thirteen-year-old orphan, is worried about his forty-something foster father's inability to stay away from alcohol. Will David become a ward of the state? As his inability to communicate his worries deepens, David alienates himself from his foster father and his baseball teammates. Just as his foster father must want to renounce alcohol, David must long to embrace the care and friendship extended to him by others. These two crises come to a head when both characters reveal that they live in a fantasy world of love for twenty-something family friend, Melissa.

The story uses the jargon of the 1990s, complete with frozen tortellini (6) for dinner. David is hugged by Betty, the kindly older evening desk clerk at the hotel: "She grabbed him and pressed him against all her softness" (32). In contrast, when Melissa hugs him he reacts to its sensuousness: "He was as tall as she was now, and he could feel her breasts against his chest. He pulled back rather quickly, embarrassed" (42).

Aside from the reference to "breasts," foster father Paul's alcohol and cigarette problems and the coffee cup he carries with him from the fast-food restaurant, this novel would be most like signature Hughes novels: good stories without graphic scenes of . . . whatever one now usually, but not always, gets a steady dose of in fiction for children and young adults. As David practices his pitching techniques, one acquainted with stories of LDS Church President Heber J. Grant (Walker, 141; *Lives*, 155), can almost see some similarity here: the rigorous practice, the determination not to give up, the need to practice in solitude to sharpen one's pitching arm (*Team Picture*, 21) before taking that skill into a larger arena. In addition, David must turn the other cheek, swallow his pride, and become a member of the team—all Mormonisms cloaked for the national market—all in a hopeful star-reviewed novel.

Hughes's *End of the Race*, while set in Utah, does not focus on any Mormonisms despite its moral theme of racial prejudice. *Nutty's Ghost* is set in Missouri, and like Plummer's *Kate Bjorkman* novel set in Minnesota, has a coffee-drinking family with memorable characters.

For writers like Martha Southgate of New York and Dean Hughes of Utah, the ability to let their "light so shine" reflects on their ability to create characters one can identify with in situations that are not hopeless, though at times, the going is in the dark. By doing so, they reflect positively on the other citizens of their city and/or state.

Considering that Utah will soon be thrust into the ever-brighter light of world media reporting on the Winter Olympic in 2002, what an opportunity for its talented and hardworking story-tellers! Stories will be told. If not by those most familiar with Utah, its citizens, and the life-style of its dominant religion, then who?

For many, Utah is still the wild west. For others, Utah is just a name with no distinction of its own. In "Water Songs," a story by Utahn Terry Tempest Williams in the book *Leaving New York: Writers Look Back*, edited by Kathleen Norris (Hungry Mind Press, 1995), Ms. Williams and her New York friends and colleagues, Lee Milner and David Spencer, are collecting "intertidal creatures" (298) in Pelham Bay, New York. On a bus headed out of town, decked out in "my rubber boots with my old khakis tucked inside, my binoculars around my neck and the large net I was holding in the aisle—how odd I must look" (298). After an incredibly long and dirty day, they assemble their gear and live fish and head back to Lee's apartment on the edge of the wetlands. From there, Williams and Spencer continue on to the American Museum of Natural History via several bus transfers. As they waited at Madison and Seventy-ninth Street, a woman stopped:

> "Excuse me," she said. "I like your look. Do you mind me asking where you purchased your trousers and boots? And the binoculars are a fabulous accessory."
>
> I looked at David, who was grinning.
>
> "Utah," I said in a tired voice. "I bought them all in Utah."
>
> "I see . . ." the woman replied. "I don't know that shop." She quickly disappeared into a gourmet deli. (302)

For Utah to become well-known, it must announce itself publicly and offer excellence to those who venture there. Likewise, for a published work to be taken seriously, it must be an excellent piece of writing (Hughes and Piehl, 17).

A Web search of the Bibliotheks-Verbund Bayern (BVB) [Bavarian Library Association/Consortium, Germany] reveals that the International Youth Library, in addition to the Hughes books cited, now also holds Louise Plummer's autographed *The Unlikely Romance of Kate Bjorkman* (Delacorte Press, 1995), Ann Edwards Cannon's autographed *Amazing Gracie* (Delacorte Press, 1991), and Margaret Rostkowski's autographed *Moon Dancer* (Browndeer Press, 1995). A later package to Martha Baker delivered an autographed copy of Michael O. Tunnell's *The Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp: Based on a Classroom Diary* (Holiday House, 1996), coauthored with George W. Chilcoat.

Just a few days ago, a picture book, Shulamith Levey Oppenheim's *The Hundredth Name* (Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills, 1995), illustrated by Michael Hays, came across my desk. A young Egyptian, concerned because his camel is sad, prepares to pray to Allah. The text and beautiful illustrations reveal a trusting father-son relationship and offer a window into the Muslim faith, complete with textual and pictorial references to Allah and prayer.

Dean, talented writers, and soon-to-be-writers, continue to "let your light so shine . . ." (Matt. 5:16; 3 Ne. 12:16).

WORKS CITED

Block, Francesca Lia. "Dragons in Manhattan." *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996. 36-93.

Hughes, Dean. *End of the Race*. New York: Atheneum, 1993.

---. Preface. *Lucky's Crash Landing*. (Book 1). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990.

---. *Millie Willenheimer and the Chestnut Corporation*. New York: Atheneum, 1983.

---. *Switching Tracks*. New York: Atheneum, 1982.

---. *Team Picture*. New York: Atheneum, 1996/Aladdin Paperbacks, 1998.

Hughes, Dean, and Lois Kuznets. "Switching Tracks: Where Author and Critic Meet." *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 11.1 (1987): 154-163.

Hughes, Dean, and Kathy Piehl. "Bait/Rebait: Books with Religious Themes." *English Journal* 70.8 (Dec. 1981): 14-17.

Klause, Annette Curtis. *Blood and Chocolate*. New York: Delacorte, 1997.

Lives of our Leaders: Character Sketches of Living Presidents and Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1901.

Southgate, Martha. *Another Way to Dance*. New York: Delacorte, 1996.

Sutherland, Zena. "From A to Zena." Interviewed by Beverly Goldberg. *American Libraries* 28.3 (March 1997): 37-38.

Walker, Ronald W. "Young Heber J. Grant's Years of Passage." *BYU Studies* 24.2 (Spring 1984): 131-49.

Williams, Terry Tempest. "Water Songs." *Leaving New York: Writers Look Back.* Ed. Kathleen Norris. St. Paul, MI: Hungry Mind Press, 1995. 297-303.

Light and Delight

Harlow Söderborg Clark

For some reason my brother Kevin's sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Arrowsmith, was a legend to me, so I was disappointed that she retired before I got to sixth grade. She did teach our class once though, as a substitute, maybe for a few days. I don't remember. What I do remember is a poem she read us about an old violin that an auctioneer is about to auction off cheap, but an old man comes up and plays it and the auctioneer and everyone else see the violin's real value.

I thought it a clever poem. It was evident, even before the last stanza, that the poem was talking about more than a violin, and, indeed, Mrs Arrowsmith asked us to write about what that more was. But I couldn't. The author already said everything that could be said about the meaning in the last stanza:

> And many a man with life out of tune,
> And battered and scarred with sin,
> Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd
> Much like the old violin. (Welch, n.p.)

I felt cheated. Perhaps that was the start of my intense dislike of didactic poetry. I have since developed a certain affection for this poem as part of my culture; and when I came across Greg Newbold's illustrated edition of it in October 1996, I took it as an occasion to finally put into writing the story about Mrs. Arrowsmith's assignment in literary analysis. In January 1997, I posted a review to AML-List—though I still don't think much of it as a poem and said so in the review. Indeed, Newbold's illustrations for *The Touch of the Master's Hand* highlighted for me a technical problem with the poem. Listen to these four lines; that is, read them aloud:

> Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
> And tightening the loose strings,
> He played a melody pure and sweet,
> As a caroling angel sings.

Note how the second line needs an extra syllable to maintain its rhythm, something like, "And tightening *up* the loose strings." How odd, I thought when reading this through. Perfect rhythm and meter are usually the hallmarks of didactic poetry, even if the poet has to distort syntax or pronunciation to get them.

My attitudes toward didactic and sentimental literature have changed somewhat in the last thirteen or fourteen years. My own writing is elliptical, parabolic, allusive, symbolic — anything, I hope, but didactic. For example, in a story I'll use an episode to illustrate some cultural term, rather than explaining the term. Or I'll use juxtaposition to make a comment rather than making a comment. One day Lois Hudson, director of my master's thesis, called me in to her office. She told me about a student she'd had who worked in a very allusive symbolic style. One day Lois gave her the assignment to take her story and rewrite it so that everything was so obvious it made her want to puke (Lois likes to use words like that), then to rewrite it again in a style somewhere between the two. "I talked to her later," Lois said, and asked her if she had done the assignment. "Yes." "Was it difficult?" "Yes." "Is it a better story now?" "Yes." Of course, Lois gave me the same assignment.

I suppose I had always thought that the chief sin of didactic/sentimental literature is that it interferes with the relationship between the reader and the imaginative world of the story, saying, "This is what this world means. I don't trust you to get the point. I don't trust my words to convey it effectively." My conversation with Lois Hudson got me to thinking that maybe I don't have to write in so elusive a style to avoid intruding on my readers. Perhaps this is what got me rethinking my hostility toward didactic/sentimental writing. It was important to be able to do that because I'm a scholar of Mormon literature, and a good part of written Mormon culture is didactic. I have often heard this feature of Mormon literature described as its greatest defect, but it occurred to me one day that all didactic writing is satirical and all satiric writing is didactic, so that, while our culture's didacticism may be a weakness, its satire is a literary strength.

Though Myra Brooks Welch was not LDS, her poem is satiric. Consider the lines quoted above:

> And many a man with life out of tune,
> And battered and scarred with sin,
> Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd
> Much like the old violin.

Note that word *thoughtless*. It echoes the end of the second stanza:

> The people cheered, but some of them cried,
> "We do not quite understand
> What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:
> "The touch of a master's hand."

Clearly the attitude toward the crowd is satirical rather than compassionate, which inspires an irreverent comment about Greg Newbold's illustrations, about his ability to say something about Welch's poem that it doesn't already say about itself: The last part of the book illustrates a Skid Row bum. The last illustration shows a man with his arm around the drunk, taking him away from his life on the streets and, since the perspective is from the back, away from the readers—and, I might add, away from a poem which only preaches at him about "the change that is wrought / By the touch of the Master's hand." It offers very little compassion because it is busy mocking "the thoughtless crowd" who bought the bum cheap.

Of course it is possible to write didactic poetry with a good deal of skill.

NAKED IN CHURCH

Jen Wahlquist

(Inspired by and dedicated to Alan, Angela, Chad, Dale, Dan, Dave, David, Devin, J. D., James, Jason, Jonathan, Jordan, Marcel, Michael, Oscar, Roger, Ron, Ryan, Sam, and Si, my English 411 students, Utah Valley State College, fall semester 1966.)

. . . and so, my daughter, climb the stairs alone
To face the ancient door that bars the way;
Low organ tones come rumbling through the cracks
As holy voices float above the drone.

Remove your shoes; you stand on sacred ground;
And now the sweater: fold it, lay it flat;
Release the belt; now drop the velvet vest,
The skirt and earrings, followed by the rest.

The sun is pale and fails to warm your back;
To shiver as the inner garments fall,
Then draw deep breath and pull the ponderous door,
To walk your body fast across the floor.

The Bishop in the purple miter gasps
And heads begin to swivel; whispers flame;

Commotion stirs the benches and you hear
Above the rest, your sister shriek your name.

. . . and so, my daughter, bring me nothing else
Polite and written smoothly just for show;
For now the day has come to spark the fire,
Entrust to me your passion, your desire.

When next you slide a poem on my desk,
I'll lock my eyes with yours in searching gaze;
And if I read embarrassment as hot
As that which stained your face the day you walked,

It means you've made a sacrifice of pride:
Acknowledged you have nothing, now, to hide.
I smile and nod; before me lies your heart;
With soul exposed, at last you've reached . . . the
start.

October 9 - December 18, 1996
(15 Revisions)

This poem is in the finest tradition of didactic poetry, the ars poetica written to instruct in the art of poetry (note the date range of composition and the parenthetical instruction on revision) and to cause delight in the instruction.

Wahlquist suggests the connection between poetry and worship[1] (or blasphemy—*anathema,* used exclusively now to mean *cursed,* comes from a stem that means *dedicate*). The next poem suggests something I have mentioned before: the connection in LDS culture between satire and worship.

CRUCIFIXION IN JUDEA

Clinton Larson

The myth and the reality convey the sign:
INRI, but we in the distance of history,
Precise and limitless, survey and then define
His suffering again, for our consistory.
We know in the analogues of formulative speech
That Pretonius drove Him down against the cross
And split His palms where they could reach.
Crimen est actio before this miracle of dross.
But his body was not so suspended. Nails through
palms
Cannot support the weight, as some medieval art
might show,
For we know of Pierre Barbet, who proved it was not
so
By nailing a freshly amputated arm and weighing it.
The Romans were the masters here, and so again
They drove the nails, with care and point,
To cause the greatest pain. At the wrist's crease
There is a muscle over a structure of substantial
bone,
And between the bones a little space: there, they
said,
And there! to hold his weight, piercing the median
nerve,
For He had been scourged and crowned and led to
Calvary,
Then exposed, His robe against His skin with the
blood
Of the flogging, flaying Him when ripped away to
ready Him.
But that was less than the pain of nails fixed
And sinking in with hammer blows. Not a little
nerve
As one might feel in the valley of a wound, but for
tides
Of pain, like an arm or leg cut off, that overwhelms
The muscles of the arms, neck, head, and chest
And causes them to pull and cramp in the rage
Of agony. Then the crosspiece was raised and pulled
To drag Him backwards on the ground before the
tree,
And together they were lifted up to form the cross.
To stay the threshing legs from tearing Him free,
They drove the fixing nail into His feet.
The sinuous writhing came, in all His body, so He
strained
Upward to keep His breath and ease the pain,
Fully standing on the nail. But only for a time.
Then He slumped, exhausted, hanging from the
wrists.
Then the cycle of relief again, to strain again,
Through the hours of His torment, and then again.
So weakened in the Garden and then by this,
He sagged and failed against the pain, the muscles
Of His chest drawing in to still His heart and breath.
Who has forgotten the outrage of the crucifixion
In the tenor of the cloisters of gentle remembrance?

It was He who took all that men could give.
Receive Him as He gave Himself and so remember
Him.

This poem is satirical because Larson is debunking a popular and sentimental portrayal of Jesus on the cross; it is didactic because he debunks the sentimentality by showing how someone dies on a cross; it is also devotional, especially the invitation in the last line. This connection in our culture between satire and worship intrigues me deeply, and I hope to explore it at length in future papers. For this paper a few examples will do.

I once said to a fellow I worked with: "What would you have if a certain Argentine writer were to open a dessert shop? Jorge Borges's Pudding & Pies." I knew, as soon as I had said it, that I had not only a story, but the title story of a collection about the people who frequent Borges's shop. The opening follows:

> No, I am not that Borges.
>
> Borges my name, that is true. Jorge Borges. Luis my middle name. But I am not *that* Borges.
>
> "But surely," you say, "every man is Borges," and you would say it more if I told you he comes into my cafe, and talks to my guests.
>
> No, I am not that Borges, though he steals my guests for his ficciones. Let me introduce you. This man over here by the window, with his papers spread out, this is Don Menard.

To get a properly Borgesian feel for the stories, I checked out a copy of *The Aleph* and came across this passage in the title story for which many here will recognize a highly satiric liturgical context:

> How then can I translate into words the limitless Aleph, which my floundering mind can scarcely encompass? Mystics, faced with the same problem, fall back on symbols: to signify the godhead, one Persian speaks of a bird that somehow is all birds; Alanus de Insulis, of a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere. (26)

Satire is very much a part of our non-ceremonial worship as well. Consider Elder Malcolm Jeppsen's account, in April 1990 general conference, of this notice he put in the magazines in his "medical office waiting room[:] 'Many of the ads in this magazine are misleading, deceptive, and are a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor, and dead" (44-45).

Satire even appears in our scripture. The thirty-first chapter of Alma records both the words of a prayer the Zoramites offered on their Rameumptom and the astonishment of "Alma and his brethren and his sons" (19) that every person offered the selfsame prayer. Alma comments, "Now, after the people had all offered up thanks after this manner, they returned to their homes, never speaking of their God again until they had assembled themselves together again to the holy stand, to offer up thanks after their manner" (23).

Satire in our worship is not surprising; the claim that since the apostles died every organized attempt to follow their teachings and the teachings of their Master has failed and lacks the authority of God has the audacity of fine satire and, like satire, points to the weakness or failings of the thing it comments on.

THE HOLLYWOOD JESUS

The Hollywood Jesus is no Goya Jesus,
Kneeling by lamplight on 3rd of May
Before line of faceless men bowing over rifled
bayonettes
Dread his face he stretches arms
Sheltering the man behind, who cannot look
Eyes imploring, for the man behind,
Think, brothers, who you are killing.

The Hollywood Jesus, no Goya Jesus—does not even
cry
Eli, Eli, Lama Sabacthani.
No, he is serene, composed,
Showing he can
Die like a man.

Let me suggest that whatever vertu there is in this poem, it is not the vertu of compassion. It is one of two pieces I've written, both brief, out of frustration and anger at cultural clichés which implied for me deeply troubling attitudes. My purpose is not to express compassion for those being shot, nor to condemn the men bowing over their rifles, but to express anger at an attitude which sees death as something we go nobly to; not—with St. Paul—as the last enemy which must be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26), but as something *men* must pursue nobly.

Brian Evenson has gone much further in deconstructing violence than I will. Both my pieces took several years to write because I felt they would have to be long and complex to expose the corruption inherent in the clichés I was parodying; both turned out brief because I found I could do what I wanted briefly and because my imaginative sympathies aren't satirical. I can't sustain satire to the lengths Evenson can.

Satire is not the word we usually hear to describe Evenson's violent work, but in a *Deseret News* interview Evenson said he "feels that by portraying violence stripped of all justifying rhetoric, a reader will see how pointless and unglamorous violence really is" (Poyfair, B-5). Evenson's stance toward his subject matter is thus satiric in implying a better way of living than it portrays. In another interview he said that he wanted to force people to see violence for the evil that it is. Note that that word *force* implies coercion and therefore violence—but that's another paper; I mention Evenson's comment because it expresses a satirical stance toward his *audience* as well as towards his subject.

None of the stories I've read in *Altmann's Tongue* modifies that satiric stance—and we could hardly want Evenson to show violence as a glamorous, meaningful response to life. I had two reactions when I started reading the book: First, it was evident this was the work of a very gifted writer (and eight years younger, darn it). "Job Eats Them Raw, with the Dogs" is a fine story, indeed. Second, I kept remembering a review I had read of Diane Keaton's film of Judith Rossner's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar.* The reviewer said the novel was fine work but "too unrelentingly bleak" to be great. Evenson's stories are so unrelentingly bleak that Brendan Bernard, reviewer for the *New York Times,* dismissed Evenson as "a backwater Bret Easton Ellis." Apparently he didn't see what Leslie Norris did: "Brian's fiction seems to say, 'This is how we would be if we didn't know right from wrong'" (qtd. in Johnston). But how is a reviewer to pick on something present only in its absence? There is precious little humor to suggest saving grace—grace of any kind; and the bleaker Evenson's world, the more violent the book seems as an experience. R. A. Rasband, writing on AML-List on Halloween day, 1996, called "The Munich Window: A Persecution" a "remarkable portrait of a psychotic personality." I found it unrelentingly heavy-handed. After several pages I thought, Okay, I've got the point about the unreliable narrator. Can't we move on? By the last sentence, I felt that, if the story was a persecution, it was a persecution of the reader. I could clearly see the stamp of Mormon didacticism in the way the narrator continues to pound home the point. It represented to me the worst in the Mormon didactic tradition.

Now it's easy for a disappointed reader to make clever comments, cheap shots, about a thing someone else has spent considerable time and effort creating. I mention my anger at "The

Munich Window" only because there is a point at which satire can, often does, move from attacking the object of a satire to attacking the subject. As I was reading Swift in class one day, it occurred to me that recent conservative rhetoric about welfare mothers would be a fit object for an updated version of "A Modest Proposal," with welfare mothers the subject. Then I wondered, would welfare mothers feel comforted or attacked by the piece? Consider the following slightly emended passage where Swift's narrator is explaining why he would preserve a ratio of four women to one man for breeding: "These children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our [welfare mothers], therefore one male will suffice to serve four females."

Shortly thereafter I discovered just such a reworking by an obscure nineteenth-century eastern European immigrant to eastern Utah named Grobredos. Grobredos was not LDS—but apparently was quite sympathetic to Mormons—considering the antagonism many Gentiles showed. He was concerned with the situation of the plural wives of Mormondom if polygamy were to be abolished. But sympathetic as it is, I detect in it a certain—animosity? I'll let you judge.

A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR PREVENTING THE SPARE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF THE POOR MORMONS IN UTAH FROM BEING A BURDEN TO THEIR HUSBANDS AND FATHERS, AND FOR MAKING THEM BENEFICIAL TO THE PUBLIC

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through Great Salt Lake City or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors, crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for a livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants: who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to do missionary work in Spain, thus bringing more immigrants to this desert land.

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers (when they are not imprisoned by the government for producing too many children of too many women) is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation. But since the government has rejected Mr. Twain's proposal to so honor the husbands of Utah for their noble deeds of marriage and providing for their children, has, in fact, forced the fathers to disavow their children and their children's mothers (who, as they are not legal wives can be forced to testify that they *are* wives, thus sending their men to prison and further burdening themselves), since the government, I say, has forced the husbands of Utah to abandon their plural wives and children, might I make a proposal more modest than Mr. Twain's?

As the government has confiscated the properties and laid grievous fines on them with no ability to pay, I therefore humbly propose that the men of Utah be allowed to auction off their surplus wives and children to satisfy the fines and appetites of the federal appointees, who have already devoured everything else in the territory.

I propose further that the federal government provide a slaughterhouse so that while the spare wives provide flesh for the appointees the children might provide meat. A friend advises me this hath been swiftly tried in Ireland and makes a favorite dish of the English landlords and governors.

Since marriage is a circumstance much regarded by our Mormons, since one male is sufficient to serve four females, and since the women of Utah are well-known for their fecundity, there should be an adequate supply to satisfy the appetites of the soldiers and other federal agents stationed in Utah.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in this matter. In the generous spirit of Adam Smith, I wish only that the government pay market value for what it has already shown a willingness to devour and that it pay the costs of maintaining or disposing of the wives and children it hath forced the men of Utah to abandon. I stand to gain not a single penny from this proposal, having but one wife, no children to spare, and no plans of siring more.

In planning this essay I had thought to end here, but to end an essay about the limitations of satire with a satire seemed to me to commit the error I often see in satire of affirming the thing it challenges. Wasn't there something more I could say than that we need more for a great literature than satire? Could I not say something about that more? And so, briefly, I will. As President Hinckley reminded us in the January 1997 *Ensign*, Joseph Smith was in jail when the Saints fled Missouri, in Liberty's jail crying, "O God where art thou? and where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ears be penetrated with their cries." (D&C 121:1-2).

Lionel Trilling, in *Beyond Culture* talks about the aims of modern literature, the literature starting to be written while Joseph was going through his trials. The rhetorical stance of that literature toward society is satiric. They were trying to destroy a corrupt society. Trilling compares modern literature, in passing, to a howitzer or a Roman quinquereme—a ship with five banks of oars bringing new culture to barbarians. Joseph's plea is as eloquent a brief portrait of the corruption of the modern world as I know.

And that portrait of corruption is where much modern literature ends. The Doctrine & Covenants does not. True, the Lord's reply is bracingly satiric: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (122:8), but the reply begins, "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment" (121:7), and proceeds to show the moment of those afflictions—particularly the moment of Joseph's six-year-old clinging to him and being thrust away with the sword (122:6)—the moment of Joseph's own descent into the peace the Lord pronounced. Modern and contemporary literature have shown well the corruption of the world, sometimes the peace. Latter-day Saints have made notable contributions, and we have other contributions as well, contributions of comfort, praise, joy, of which I hope to see more. Much more.

HARLOW SÖDERBORG CLARK presented this paper at the 1997 annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters.

NOTES

[1] I would make the same connection between poetry and blasphemy. Terms dealing with the sacred often have dual meanings, as David Jones knew when he titled a long poem *The Anathemata*. Anathema has historical meanings of both blessed and cursed. Similarly, though no one wants to be stigmatized, in Catholic tradition, the stigmata are marks of Christ's crucifixion, and to bear them is a blessing.

WORKS CITED

Bernhard, Brandon. "In Short: Fiction." *New York Times*, late ed-final. Nov. 22, 1994, sec. 7, p. 22.

Borges, Jorge. *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969*. Ed. and trans. by Norman Thomas DiGiovanni in collaboration with the author. New York: Dutton, 1970.

Evenson, Brian. *Altmann's Tongue*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

Jeppsen, Malcolm. "Who Is a True Friend?" Ensign, May 1990. 44-46.

Johnston, Jerry. "Brother Grimm: Brian Evenson Draws on Life's Dark Side in Enlightening Collection." *Deseret News*, September 25, 1994. E-1.

Larson, Clinton. "Crucifixion in Judea." In his *The Lord of Experience*. N.p.: Promised Land Publications, 1968. 50-51.

Poyfair, Patrick D. "Professor's Award-Winner Raises Campus Eyebrows." *Deseret News*, March 12, 1995, B-5.

Trilling, Lionel. *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning*. New York: Viking, 1965.

Wahlquist, Genevieve ("Jen"). "Naked in Church." Copy in my possession.

Welch, Myra Brooks. Illustrated by Greg Newbold. *The Touch of the Master's Hand.* Carson City, NV: Gold Leaf Press, 1996.

Nebuchadnezzar Grazed by Daniel's God

Harlow Söderburg Clark

> . . . and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19:12)

> Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. (Dan. 3:28-9)

Nebuchadnezzar's language is the language of power, not conversion. Unlike Isaiah, who said, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5), Nebuchadnezzar used his lips to command worship and pronounce as dung any who did not recognize the power of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God.

The competition between gods is a recurring theme in the Old Testament. "Maybe your god sleeps," Elisha taunted the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:27), and had his people fill four barrels of water three times, soaking the sacrifice. He then demonstrated the Lord's power by asking the Lord to consume the sacrifice, wood, stones, water, and dust. Then he slew the priests of Baal and fled from Jezebel. Shortly afterward, Benhadad, king of Syria came against Israel and was defeated. "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20:23)—to which the God of Israel responded by sending a man to "the king of Israel, [who] said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (1 Kings 20:28).

There are many such incidents in the Old Testament, which sometimes makes that volume of scripture sound like children shouting, "My god can beat up your god." Note the lowercase *g*: my intent is not to sound irreverent, but to point out that the conversions from such events rarely last. The children of Israel in Israel and Judah return as readily to their vomit as do the children of Israel in Zarahemla. My intent is also not to sound condescending, for, as Spencer W. Kimball said, celebrating America's bicentennial,

> In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern, and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.
>
> When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of idols of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. (5)

And when the enemy's fortifications come down, we praise our missile gods and our green-paper gods. "My people have been praying for this for many years. We'll gladly take credit," said a Native American elder talking on the radio about the fall of the Berlin Wall. I haven't heard many such comments from American Latter-day Saints—more comments about the triumph of American capitalism—but it is apparently a view widely held by eastern European Saints that we owe the collapse of communism not to the complex military/industrial/economic might of the West but simply (wholly, holy) to the workings of the Spirit.

Michael Amundsen, whom I home-taught for several months in my previous ward, invited the elders' quorum to screen a film he had made for the Church. He told us that the assignment was a documentary, a yearbook of sorts, about the Church in action ca. 1993 but that, as he interviewed eastern European Saints, the theme that came up over and over was how the Freiberg Temple hastened the end of communist rule. That became the focus of Mike's film. "Our assignment is affirmative:" President Kimball says, ". . . to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies" (6); and indeed, one of the stories in Mike's film tells how the temple was built with the approval of East German president Erik Honnaker and partly at his suggestion as an alternative to numerous requests the government was receiving for travel to Switzerland.

I glory in the idea of the gospel toppling oppressive regimes—by converting them. I shudder to think that for the first thirty-plus years of my life and before, the two most powerful nations on earth tried to bankrupt each other in the name of their missile idols, giving Pyrrhus his second victory, though we attribute the victory to our missile gods and our god of the capital S with two bars of gold passing through.

And yet, deeply ironically, worshiping these false gods does not stop us from claiming allegiance to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Brigham, the God of Sariah, Rebeccah, Rachel, Emma, and Eliza. I sometimes wonder whether the allegiance we claim is to God or to God's power. Come, let us consider together the Lord's servant Job, a perfect and an upright man who feared God and eschewed evil, and his house was made dung, yet he spake nothing amiss of God. I first read Job in family home evening, where my father introduced his as a story designed to show that suffering is not the result of sin, that we mustn't impute unrighteousness to someone because they suffer calamity. Desolation comes not only upon the wicked.

And yet . . . why does so much discussion of Job assume that God's speech from the whirlwind is a divine chastisement for daring to question God, a show of power to shut Job up, to show him how worthless he is? This long puzzled me, and two years ago I used this occasion to explore the question and to relate my discovery of a ceremonial structure in the book of Job, a ceremonial structure familiar to many in my audience, a ceremony ending in deification.

At one point I suggested that, although we assume the whirlwind is some sort of megaphone, an instrument God uses to emphasize his speech, the whirlwind is an ancient symbol of chaos; and it is just as likely that God is struggling to break out of the whirlwind, to make his voice heard over the roar of the wind.

Does that seem blasphemous? I asked. Does it seem disrespectful to suggest that there are things in the world God cannot control? Think for a minute about the problem of suffering. When I studied literary theory and criticism with Marden Clark, he mentioned in class one day how important the problem of suffering has been to literature and criticism. In philosophical terms, it's usually stated something like this: There is suffering in the world, especially the suffering of innocent people. Three possible explanations exist. First, there is no being powerful enough to prevent such suffering. Second, there is a being with such power, but he *wants* innocent people to suffer—in which case God is evil and not worthy of our worship. Or third, God does not want innocent people to suffer but can't prevent or stop it—in which case God is powerless, and not worthy of our worship.

Now, after several years of carrying that definition around in the back of my mind and trying to figure out what seemed so skewed about it, it occurred to me one day to ask, "When we say that if God doesn't have the power to stop suffering, then he's not worthy of our worship, aren't we saying that we worship power—that only power is worthy of our worship?"

I tossed off this part about worshipping power, but Clark, ever the gracious mentor, was in the audience and asked about it during the question/answer period: "Do you think you could expand on the part about worshiping power?" Well, I think I could, I said, but I didn't understand the question and asked him later what he meant by it. He said he thought the idea that, when we focus on God's power, we are actually worshiping power was the paper's most significant insight. Perceptive question. Much of what I write deals with ideas of power and the power and consequences of ideas, so I want to look at a few consequences of basing art on an aesthetic of power.

I became aware of the aesthetic of power through a lecture Clark gave in 1975 as part of BYU's centennial celebration, "Science, Religion and the Humanities: The Profounder Challenge." He begins the essay with Lionel Trilling's account of teaching the first modern literature class at Columbia College, "modern" being roughly the period from the dedication of the Kirtland Temple to the end of World War II. It is a literature of tremendous destructive power, Trilling says, using the image of a howitzer. When I sought out the essay, "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," in graduate school I recognized in it a model of how I had been taught literature since high school, literature as a force at odds with society.

The artist as outcast may be a theme as old as Plato's "Ion," in which Socrates dismisses Ion as an unproductive member of society because he can produce poetry only when moved upon by his muse, not on demand. This dynamic implies an economic alienation of artists, and it is indeed possible to earn an advanced degree—a professional degree—as a writer and have no training, none, in the business of writing. Not because the writer thinks things like negotiating contracts, networking, tracking expenses and earnings, and understanding depreciation of office equipment unimportant, but because no training is offered.

I mention that fact only in passing. More important for my purpose today is that an aesthetic of power ill-equips us to understand or appreciate art not based on such an aesthetic. During winter term 1985 I took a poetry workshop from Tess Gallagher. One day Tess (we all called her that) walked into class and told us about a story Ray Carver had written ten or so years earlier, about a couple whose boy is hit by a car on his birthday and dies after a few days. His mother has ordered a cake for him but forgets about it while sitting up with him. The baker, knowing nothing of this, keeps calling in the middle of the night and harassing the couple, until the wife realizes who's calling, and they go and confront him. He asks forgiveness and comforts them, feeds them, talks with them.

When Carver went to publish this story, Tess told us, his editor, Gordon Lish, felt that the story was not dark or nihilistic enough and made him change it. Years later, when he decided to publish the original uncensored version, rather than embarrassing Lish, he told people that the maturing demands of his art had caused him to revise the story. "The lies that man makes me tell to protect his friends."

This story of editorial meddling resonates deeply for me, as does Carver's tale of reconciliation and forgiveness. In the hospital room, Ann and Howard tell each other they've been praying. "She realized with a start that, until now, it had only been happening to her and to Scotty. She hadn't let Howard into it, though he was there and needed it all along" (286). Later, trying to find her way out of the hospital, she meets a family in a waiting room, praying for their son, a bystander in a knife fight. It is not simply the presence of prayer, the acknowledgment of what people do in times of trouble that makes "A Small, Good Thing" a profoundly religious story; rather, it is the sense of people sharing their griefs with each other and the sense of atonement, the atoneness Ann and Howard come to with the baker and with each other. Carver uses an ancient act of religious community to resolve the story, a shared meal, a memorial meal—of bread. "Eating is a small, good thing in a time like this" (301), the baker says, breaking the bread for them and with them: "Take, eat."

The Lish-ized version, "The Bath," has none of this sacramental quality to it. "The Bath" ends with the taunting voice of the baker, "Have you forgotten Scotty?" rather than with his comfort. It ends with no redemption from or for the baker, not even a knowledge that the voice on the phone is the baker's. *Where I'm Calling From*, Carver's selected stories, contains several revisions. I wonder how many of them represent original versions.

"A Small, Good Thing" is considered a great work of Carver's maturity. But it is not. It is a great *early* work. I wonder where the uncensored Carver would have gone; I wonder how many Mormon writers feel pressure to spiritually water-down their stories; I wonder where our literature could go if we didn't let (or had the power not to let) the prevailing literary culture tell us what kinds of things we ought to write.

Steve Epperson gave another example of how difficult it is for a power aesthetic to deal with art not based on power when he spoke on Art Censorship at Utah Valley State College, Tuesday, February 19, 1998. He cited recent examples of censorship: the Enola Gay exhibit, the removal two hours before opening of some texts and artifacts from a Church Museum of Art exhibit on the Relief Society, and the censoring of the Rodin exhibit at BYU. Then, to emphasize that censorship comes from the left as well as the right, he told of an exhibit of domestic art planned for the Salt Lake Arts Center. The theme was the art women are able to create through/despite housework; but when the art began coming in, the administrators didn't like its implications. They had expected that being a homemaker would hamper a woman's ability to create art—so they fired the curator and canceled the exhibit.

I asked Epperson for details and he gave some examples. One woman made her bottled vegetables works of art. Another sculpted—in cake. A third took pictures of her mother hanging clothes, clothes hung with great attention to the visual effect of the shapes and colors. The subtext of the exhibit, Epperson said, was the way women artists were victims. He talked with some of the artists and they told him they weren't interested in parading their victimhood: they wanted to be taken seriously as artists.

This implies a serious problem with the aesthetic of power: it makes art satirical. As I suggested in my 1997 AML paper, "Light and Delight," satire cannot, finally escape the limitations of didacticism: all satire is didactic—wishing to teach, as all didactic writing is satirical—wishing to show us a better way. Trilling suggests, as I have said, that modern literature is an attack on society. Accepting that definition means that works which don't exercise power are inferior works and won't be accepted.

Joanna Russ, in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, explores the various ways a literary culture keeps intellectual dominance by excluding certain genres or genders from its definition of literature, and I refer you to it. I want here to explore another aspect of defining art as an exercise of power: If we define art as power, as force, we will interpret art as attack. Consider how often art deals with wrenching things, things difficult or intractable: death and failure—the failure of families to nurture each other, the failure of people and peoples to live what they know.

Recently, I had the pleasure of reviewing Margaret Young's *Love Chains* for AML-List. I noted that the introductory essay, "Sharks! or You Mean You Hold a Temple Recommend and You Wrote That?" set out a rhetorical question which the stories answer, "Yes. Yes this is fiction worthy of a temple recommend holder." Margaret graciously responded on July 23 and commented on the essay:

> I wrote the introduction to *Love Chains* ("Sharks") because I was running scared. Literally, actually. I was preparing the manuscript just after returning from a year in Hawaii and reflecting on a rumor—untrue—I had heard that Levi Peterson had been excommunicated for his fiction. I was jogging around my neighborhood thinking of the young women I loved—I was a Laurel advisor—and wondering if someone would tell them they'd maybe better shun me because I wrote some pretty edgy, controversial stuff. I was actually crying, just so scared that I'd get in trouble for my writing. So I defended myself with that essay, adding it as a "YES I BELIEVE" thing that I could show a stake president or bishop at my court. Then Brian Evenson had his *Altmann's Tongue* bitten into and I got scareder and scareder. Bruce Jorgensen thought my essay was sorta dumb and said I should prepare it as a pamphlet that anyone who didn't know me could read in case they thought they'd maybe better turn my name into my stake pres.

I knew when I wrote the review what function the introduction had, but why state the obvious in a review? When I read "Sharks" (and then "Hanging Out the Dirty Words") I realized I could either approach Margaret's fears straight on or honor Emily Dickinson and tell them slant. I decided to say something about "Sharks" that was implicit in the essay, but may not have been obvious, even to the author, which is that the answer to the rhetorical question in the essay's title is "Yes, the kind of writing I do is consistent with holding a temple recommend."

The temple's importance to Margaret shows in many ways in her work. *House Without Walls* begins with Margaret and Bruce in the temple doing ordinance work for Samuel Misch and Henni Van der Meer, Holocaust victims. (Deeply intriguing, given the Church's recent decision to suspend such work because of the offense taken by children of Holocaust survivors.) In *Salvador* Julie knows enough about the temple and keeping her covenants to realize when she's in a false temple and what her being there means about other characters in the novel and about the murdered friend she found hanging in a tree. Julie's ability to distinguish between a true and a false temple saves her and helps her distinguish President Piggott from Beelzebub (the pig god on a stick in *Lord of the Flies*), even before he uses his priesthood to rescue a woman from a murder attempt. Temple imagery shows up repeatedly in *Love Chains*, most tragically and poignantly in Miguel Aju's perception that his dead son has rejected him because Miguel has forsaken his covenants. And in "Zoo Sounds" the importance of those covenants, of the reconciliation we seek in temple prayer, allows us first to see the husband as an oppressive jerk, then to transform our understanding of him as his wife seeks reconciliation. Margaret told me there is no temple imagery in *Elegies and Love Songs* but I imagine that it contains themes of reconciliation and redemption.

Similarly, in *The Backslider* Levi Peterson opts for reconciliation over satire. When Frank's brother Jeremy mutilates himself and becomes Sister Alice, Levi could have shown the closed-mindedness of rural Mormons; instead he holds up the bishop as a moral hero, teaching his ward to love and accept Sister Alice and working to help Frank as he feels himself pulled toward suicide. Finally, *The Backslider* is, in the oldest tradition of Mormon literature, a conversion story—and not Frank's conversion only, Marianne's as well.

Chieko Okazaki likewise opts "to build bridges" rather than exercise power in the opening pages of *Lighten Up* when she tells how she and her mother went through the house "burn[ing] fans, books, documents, pictures--anything that might say, 'A Japanese family lives here.' She says they did not know "which side might pose the most danger to us as Japanese-Americans" but she does not try to shame or blame either side for what happened to her and her family afterwards; rather she seeks to show us the consequences of her decision then "to build bridges interculturally" (7).

Carol Lynn Pearson is another author who chooses not to exercise power—power in the form of anger. Having been the focus of considerable anger at times, I'm moved by Pearson's ability to handle such volatile issues as divorce, feminism, and homosexuality in a way that asks for community rather than retribution.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR GRAZING

Were there not three men in the fire?
Now a fourth walks freely, like the son of God.
What God can free three?
Therefore I decree a dunghill
Any house, nation, language who speaks against the God
Who can deliver from fire with no smell of smoke or singe.

But the Lord God was not in the fire.
A great wind tore through the orchard
Leaving root but tearing branches,
Dropping Nebuchadnezzar in orchard grass.

But the Lord God was not in the wind.
The king ate straw withheld by Pharaoh,
Bathed in dew, hair like feathers, nails like claws,
But could not fly as seven times passed in the wind
Where the Lord God was not.

Then came a lamb, grazed the great king's feathers,
Clipped the claws, received the praise of the powerless.

HARLOW SÖDERBURG CLARK presented this paper at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

WORKS CITED

Carver, Raymond. "A Small, Good Thing." *Where I'm Calling From.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988. 280-301.

Kimball, Spencer W. "The False Gods We Worship." *Ensign,* June 1976: 3-6.

Okazaki, Chieko N. *Lighten Up!* Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1993.

Peterson, Levi S. *The Backslider.*

Russ, Joanna. *How to Suppress Women's Writing.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Young, Margaret. *Elegies and Love Songs.*

---. *House Without Walls.*

---. *Love-Chains.*

---. *Salvador.*

Sanpete County Humor: The Tales and the Tellers

Edward A. Geary

Humor always has a target; someone or something is "made fun" of. Humor is most inoffensive when it is self-mocking, when the teller himself or herself is the target. When the humor is aimed at someone else, the target can easily become a victim and sometimes a scapegoat. Then our enjoyment of the fun is tinged with guilt, which may detract from or add to the pleasure, depending on our frame of mind.

Ethnic humor can be especially problematic in our age of multicultural sensitivity and political correctness. Ethnic humor marginalizes its target because it depends for its effect on accentuating the differences between the ethnic group and the larger population. It exploits and perpetuates stereotypes. However, there are two distinct kinds of ethnic humor. The first is the humor directed at an ethnic group by outsiders, often with hostile or demeaning intent: for example, "Polack" jokes. The second kind is the humor created by the ethnic group itself, the stories they tell on themselves. This humor is no less stereotypic, perhaps, but it has a different tone. An obvious example is the Jewish humor that is a staple of the American entertainment industry. The Scandinavian humor of Sanpete County belongs to this latter category. It is an "us" humor, not a "them" humor.

Three major factors combined to make Sanpete County the most distinctive subregion in Mormon Country. The first factor was its early settlement (Manti was established in 1849) and rapid growth during its first decades, followed by a much slower rate of change over the last hundred years. As a result, Sanpete County preserves some of Utah's most traditional townscapes and finest examples of nineteenth-century architecture.

The second factor was the distribution of the population among several different communities, each of which prized its own local identity and none of which was able to attain a dominant social or economic position. Of the three largest towns, Manti was the county seat and site of the LDS temple, Ephraim the Mormon educational center after the establishment of Snow Academy in 1888, and Mount Pleasant the main bridgehead for the non-Mormon population and home to the Presbyterian mission school, Wasatch Academy. However, the next rank of towns, including Gunnison, Moroni, Fairview, Spring City, and Fountain Green, would not yield an ounce of preeminence to their larger neighbors, nor would the half-dozen smaller villages. Sanpete towns have been compared to Greek city-states in their fierce local independence combined with a sense of all being Sanpeters together.

The third factor contributing to the formation of a distinctive culture region was the large number of immigrants from the Scandinavian countries, Norway, Sweden, and especially Denmark, who were directed to Sanpete County by LDS Church leaders. The Scandinavian contingent was substantial in most towns but especially large in Ephraim, where it made up more than three-fourths of the population. Not coincidentally, Ephraim was also the most fertile ground for Sanpete humor.

Ephraim's humor was largely the product of a group of talented performers who were second- and third-generation descendants of the original Scandinavian immigrants. By all accounts, the dean of Ephraim storytellers was Peter C. Peterson Jr., better known as "Petie Bishop." Petie Bishop was an LDS ward bishop for fourteen years, but his nickname was not derived from that calling. His grandfather, a Norwegian immigrant named Canute Peterson, was a pioneer bishop in Ephraim and subsequently president of the Sanpete LDS Stake. Bishop Peterson's family were tagged with the nickname "Bishop" to distinguish them from the several other Peterson (-sen) families in the community. Thus Petie Bishop's father, Peter C. Peterson, Sr., was commonly known as "Pete Bishop" even though he never served as a bishop (Lee and Madsen, 20-21).

One of the most widely repeated Sanpete stories was inspired by the humorous confusion caused by these Scandinavian patronymics-turned-surnames. In the version recounted by Woodruff Thomson, "It was said that one time a general authority came to Ephraim and was presiding over the meeting and at the close said, 'Would Brother Peterson please give the closing prayer,' and half the congregation stood up and started to come forward. And he said, 'No, I mean Brother Peter Peterson,' and five of them sat down" (Peterson, 12).

The nicknames that were employed to distinguish among all of the Peter Petersons and Hans Hansens and Jens Jensens are an important component of Sanpete humor. At an Ephraim reunion held in Salt Lake City in 1945, Royal Madsen presented a "roll call" of 232 nicknames. Among them were occupational nicknames, including "Charlie Welldriver" Iverson; "Painter" Hansen, "Hat Steenie," "Salt Peter," "Pete Pig-killer," "Chris Dobemaker," and "Flying Carpenter" Christensen; nicknames derived from physical appearance, including "Scottie Water-eye," "Red Whiskers" Olsen, "Perty Pete" Larsen, and "Chris Tallerass"; and nicknames derived from behavioral characteristics or mannerisms: "Contrary John," "Smiler Pete," "Faithful Andrew," "Karen Scrook" (*skruk* is an onomopoetic Danish word for a bad-tempered setting hen), and "Andrew Ah-hah" (Lee and Madsen, 14-19). A nickname could become a more securely fixed identity tag than the original name. The story is told of a stranger who arrived in Ephraim and inquired of the men lounging on the "wise bench" on Main Street whether any of them knew Jacob Jensen. No one did.

> The stranger was determined. He said, "There's got to be a man by that name in this town. I've been told right where he lives. He lives in the South Ward four blocks east of Main Street. Are you sure you don't know Jacob Jensen?"
>
> Then Jake Butcher, one of the old-timers, scratched his head and said, "Hell, that's me." (Butler, 56)

Hector Lee reports that when the president of Snow College

> tried to pay a contractor for a new roof, no one knew the legal name of the individual to be paid. He being out of town and the president being a sensible man, the voucher was made out and in due time a check was received from the state capitol addressed to the man everybody knew—Shingle Pete" (Lee and Madsen, 12).

Nicknames were difficult to avoid. When H. P. Hansen came to Ephraim, he discovered that the local druggist had the same name. Seeking to distinguish himself without recourse to a nickname, he added another initial, calling himself H. P. Q. Hansen. But the townspeople immediately christened him "Alphabet" Hansen (Jensen, 3). As was the case with Petie Bishop, a nickname could persist from generation to generation. Oluf Thursby acquired the nickname "Oluf Coffee Pot" because of an insatiable appetite for "coffee so thick it would float a pewter spoon" (Lee and Madsen, 15). For two generations his family bore the common designation of "the Coffee Pots" even though some of them were strict observers of the Word of Wisdom (Peterson, 17). Another manifestation of the durability of a nickname can be seen in the case of "Peep Hole" Soren, who got his nickname during the Prohibition era when he drilled a hole through the wall of his business establishment in order to spy on a bootlegger. Many years later, the Ephraim centennial parade included "a float depict[ing] a man peering through a hole at another mixing a container of liquid. The float carried no explanatory signs, nor were any required for the Ephraimites, as the float brought forth gales of laughter and applause" (Christensen, 27).

Folklorist Hector Lee claimed in a 1949 article that he had found only one person in Ephraim who vocally objected to the use of nicknames: "He spoke long and vehemently into my wire recorder one afternoon," saying,

> Supposing you had a son or daughter, and you give them a name. What did you give them a name for? And then they go and give them some crazy pet name—call them Stub, or Jack of Clubs, or some other thing like that—a crazy name—and as time went on everybody knew 'em by that nickname. And what did you give them a name for if you don't want them called by the name?

Lee concludes, "This old gentleman has since passed on, and last summer I visited the Ephraim cemetery to pause before his tombstone and read the inscription there. In deference to his philosophy, no doubt, his family caused no nickname to appear thereon. His name was Peter Peterson. That is, 'Long Peter'" (Lee and Madsen, 22).

Ephraim humor is predominantly dialect humor. William A. Wilson describes the "dialect joke" as

> a unique form of American folklore resulting from migrations of non-English-speakers to this country. Wherever ethnic groups settled in large numbers, as the Scandinavians did in the Sanpete-Sevier region, the children and grandchildren of the original settlers told stories in which they mimicked the strange dialect and the malapropisms resulting from their parents' attempts to speak English. (162)

As Lucille Butler notes, "In almost every household, there was at least one of the younger generation who could, and would, oblige at the drop of the hat with a perfect reproduction of an altercation between father and the bishop, a wedding ceremony, or some neighbor's indiscretion. They knew how to deal out misery" (8).

Few examples of this rich stock of oral humor were recorded before the late 1940s. Professional collectors reportedly visited Ephraim a decade earlier, attracted by claims that it was "the funniest town in America." But they were able to gather little, if any, material. The reputed storytellers they approached typically responded that they "knew no stories worth repeating and wouldn't know how to tell one if [they] did know it" (Butler, 15-16, 179-80). Even Petie Bishop was struck dumb in the presence of a recording device. This resistance to being humorous on demand derived in part, no doubt, from an intuitive awareness that oral humor requires spontaneity and an appropriate social context, and in part from a reluctance to share in-group humor with outsiders. The targets of that humor were often parents or grandparents, neighbors, or Church leaders for whom the storytellers felt a genuine affection and respect. Local people understood this: "Ephraimites chuckle generation after generation, always observing an element of true sportsmanship—you can't laugh at the other fellow's grandpa unless you are willing to let him laugh at yours" (Butler, 10). But there was some apprehension that outsiders would view the targets of the humor without sympathy or understanding, merely as objects of ridicule.

When Lucille Johnson Butler first decided to collect Ephraim stories for her University of Utah M.A. thesis project in 1949 she anticipated little difficulty. Having grown up in the community, she had heard the stories all her life and was well aware "that at sheep or logging camps out in the hills, men have been known to laugh so hard they became ill and begged for mercy at the hands of some Scandinavian Will Rogers when he 'got going'" (12). Through the columns of the local newspaper, the *Ephraim Enterprise,* she invited townspeople to write down the old stories and send them to her. These efforts resulted in only a single response. Then, belatedly realizing that "the natural setting for the funny story is good food and an appreciative audience" (14), she invited a dozen storytellers and their spouses to a dinner that included such Scandinavian specialties as "sweet soup," and recorded two hours' worth of their exchanges. She repeated this process at a gathering of former Ephraimites in Salt Lake City, collecting a total of 140 stories. During the same period, Hector Lee, who was then teaching at the University of Utah, gained the confidence of several storytellers and recorded the material that later went into the production of his audio recording, "Brother Petersen Yarns." Two decades later, in 1972, Susan Peterson compiled a collection for a BYU folklore course, drawn for the most part from her aunt, Edith Peterson Christiansen (a half-sister of Petie Bishop), and from Woodruff C. Thomson, a BYU English professor. In 1973, Lucille Butler's sister, Grace Johnson, presented the gleanings of a lifetime of hearing Ephraim stories in a slim volume titled *Brodders and Sisters.* In 1979, William A. Wilson published an article in the *Utah Historical Quarterly* titled "Folklore of Utah's Little Scandinavia." These remain as the most important compilations of Ephraim humor that are accessible to the public. (Reportedly, there are some privately held collections that have not been made available.)

The collectors were well aware that performance art inevitably loses something when taken out of its original context. Susan Peterson noted, "There was an understanding, a spontaneous, uncalculated understanding, between Petie Bishop and his audiences that no strange or even partly familiar audience could duplicate" (6). Lucille Butler remarked that "in the mouths of these Sanpete artists, language is magically transformed and the voice ranges up and down the scales in changing tempos, pauses, grunts, sighs, staccatos" (20). Woodruff Thomson, certainly among the best living Sanpete storytellers, modestly insists that he cannot measure up to the artistry of the earlier generation.

Both Lucille Butler and Susan Peterson commented on the reluctance of their informants to share some stories. Butler lamented that her gender prevented her from gathering "what may be surmised as some of the best stories from the standpoint of broad humor—the shady story." She sensed that "the storytellers undoubtedly crossed out and skirted around much that the public and the writer must go without" (29). Peterson encountered greater resistance because, although herself a great-granddaughter of Canute Peterson, she had never lived in Ephraim. She told of how "a trip to Ephraim to make inquiries led me to a very hostile flower shop lady who had access to a tape of Petie Bishop and the gang telling Ephraim stories, and a telephone caution by one woman not to both[er] a certain active transmitter" (3). Even from her aunt, she sensed anxiety and mistrust arising from a concern that some stories might be "improper" to share with outsiders. Peterson found Woodruff Thomson more willing to share and anxious that the "Ephraim culture be preserved" (3). She noted, "One characteristic that both Professor Thomson and Aunt Edith shared was a sort of compulsion to explain before and after certain stories . . . , particularly church related ones, how fine the people really were and that they did have testimonies of the Gospel" (4). Peterson explained the reticence in this way: "On the same principle that you can criticize your sister but won't stand for an 'outsider' to, the Ephraimites could make fun of Long Peter but be reluctant to share that teasing. The teasing in the hands of neighbors and friends is not cruel but in the hands of strangers it would be and thus Aunt Edith's reticence to share her mimicry" (5).

In addition to Petie Bishop, other masters of Sanpete humor identified by Lucille Butler included Henry and Jake Thompson, Joe Nielson (son of "Mormon Preacher" Nielson, who figures prominently in many stories), Dave Poulson, Aaron Nielson, Nephi Hanson, Simon Stevens, and Elden Frost. With the exception of Stevens and Frost, these men were all in their sixties and seventies when Butler recorded their stories. Expatriate Ephraimites recorded in Salt Lake City included Lulu Peterson Sargent, Dr. H. Z. Lund, Thelma Christensen Hanson, Cleon Anderson, and Andrew "Wheelmaker" Jenson. Butler was unable to record Pratt Peterson, who reputedly "could contribute a volume all by himself" (28). Hector Lee and Royal Madsen add to this list H. Z. Lund's brothers, Othie and Tony (sons of LDS Church leader Anthon H. Lund), as proficient tellers of Sanpete tales (13). Interestingly, the Lund brothers, Pratt Peterson, Edith Peterson Christiansen, Lulu Peterson Sargent, and Elden Frost were all, like Petie Bishop, grandchildren of Canute Peterson. Butler notes that although she "knows of no yarn the old church leader ever told, his posterity has relieved many a dull moment for residents of Ephraim, Salt Lake City, and those from more distant parts who were fortunate enough to be around at the appropriate moment" (29).

The performance style of most of these storytellers apparently followed the deadpan vernacular tradition of American humor. Petie Bishop was described by a newspaper reporter as "a thin little man who looked a little like Will Rogers" (Mathews, 5). Lucille Butler describes his performance: "Master storyteller that he is, he never gives the slightest indication that he is aware of being funny. He rarely raises his voice but every syllable is made to count. He uses restraint and understatement to advantage in his tale telling. He smiles rarely." Many of his stories centered on "two famous old Ephraim characters": "Bishop Anderson, a little blonde Dane with a high-pitched voice, and husky-voiced Lund" (21).

This deadpan style was not universal, however. Butler notes that Joe Nielson was a "more demonstrative" performer than Petie Bishop or Henry Thompson. Dave Poulson, "heavy, rounded out and shiny on top," was "all animation" when he told a story: "his eyes pop. . . . He thrusts his head forward and clips off his syllables. . . . He splutters and puffs but on occasion can turn out some delicate enunciation in the character of a Danish lady" (23). Whether rendered deadpan or animated, however, the stories depend for their effect on the performer's mimicry of the dialect and representation of the naive, earnest persona, along with the sense of timing, the building and deflating of expectation that are essential to all humor.

An entire cycle of Ephraim stories centers on Bishop Anderson, who presided over the North Ward for a quarter of a century. Bishop Anderson was sincere and humble in his faith and much loved for his service to the ward, but he never quite mastered the English language and was sometimes taken unawares by events. Woodruff Thomson presents the good bishop testifying of his many blessings: "My bruders and sisters, I vant to bear you my testimony of de goodness of de Lord. He has blessed me abungelegan. Vhen I first come to dis country I vas sooo poor. I didn't haf a ting. I vas yust as poor as a churchmouse. Und now I haf tree vives, tree cows, tree sows, and a barrel of molasses. Und de Lord's had his hand in it!" (Peterson, 67, adapted).

Bishop Anderson was naturally concerned about the morals of his ward members, especially the young people, but also somewhat uncomfortable in approaching a delicate topic. On one occasion he felt obligated to counsel the young women:

> De report has come to me dat a lot of you liddle girls are running out effry night of de year wit de boys, and you play "Run-sheep and run-sheep" and "Hide and seek and hide and seek." Now, girls, dat is an innocent liddle game, but unless you are very careful and quit playing "Run-sheep, run-sheep" and "Hide-seek, hide-seek" effry night wit de boys, dere is going to be a lot of liddle lambs running around next spring. (Butler, 131, adapted)

The traveling salesman was a notorious threat to small-town morals. One night Bishop Anderson interrupted a dance to declare, "Brodders and Sisters, dere are dose among us who are not of us. *Dere are drummers in our midst!*" A few moments later, he stopped the music again to announce in relieved tones, "It's all right, Brodders and Sisters. Dey are ZCMI drummers" (Butler, 84, adapted).

One warm Sunday afternoon, the bishop was preaching an energetic sermon on the evils of card-playing. He reached into his pocket for a handkerchief to wipe his face, and a deck of cards went fluttering over the pulpit. Outraged, he exclaimed, "Villie! Dat's my boy Villie done dat. You, Villie, get straight home after meeting. I vill tend to you" (Butler, 101-02, adapted).

Bishop Anderson had a good deal of trouble with the boys of the ward. On one occasion, he lamented, "Wats can ve do wit dem? Here dey are. Dey stand on de corner. Dey drink de hell-fire vater, smoke de cigarettes, and holler hurrah! Wat scall ve do wit dem? Scall ve burn dem or scall ve gif dem anodder chance?" (Peterson, 37, adapted).

Woodruff Thomson's grandfather, Anders Thomson, served as a counselor to Bishop Anderson. Woodruff recounts,

> One time after conference or meeting, Bishop Anderson was over at my grandfather's place for dinner. They may have had a bishopric's meeting there or something, and Grandma invited Bishop Anderson to eat with them and my grandmother was famous for her mustard. There was none of this namby pamby stuff you get out of the Libby jar. It was just the whole mustard seed ground up, and you mix it in with some cream to make a nice cream sauce. And it was, it was really strong. You take a little touch of that and it was about as strong as horse-radish. Well, Bishop Anderson apparently didn't know the virtues of Grandma's mustard and so he had a piece of meat and he took a great big gob of mustard and put it on the meat and put it in his mouth and said, "Oh! O, Das, O, Lord! Lord, save my nose, my eyes are gone already!" (Peterson, 35)

Among the members of Bishop Anderson's ward was "Mormon Preacher" Nielson, who was given his nickname by the occupying soldiers during the Utah War because of his habit of gathering groups of boys on the street corners for impromptu gospel lessons. "Mormon Preacher" reputedly began one of his sermons in the North Ward in this way: "First, I vould like to remind Brodder Thomson not to snore so loud. He has voke up de bishop. Brodders and Sisters, I know de gospel is true, and if ve liff its principles ve can all be togedder in de Celestial Kingdom. I know dis yust as surely as I know I am going to swat dis fly dat is sitting on de pulpit. Oh—I missed him!" (Butler, 115, adapted).

The best humor often comes out of the serious concerns of life—the same concerns that can also produce tragedy. In an effort to provide for as many Saints as possible, farmland was developed in Sanpete County in excess of the dependable water supply. The spring runoff was usually sufficient; but as the stream flow dwindled in midsummer, conflicts over water rights frequently arose, sometimes with disastrous consequences. Virginia Sorensen's story "Where Nothing Is Long Ago" tells of a Sanpete County water thief who is killed by an angry neighbor. But humor can be almost as effective—and a good deal safer—as a means of dealing with such threats to the social fabric. For example, one Ephraim brother was brought before the local justice of the peace:

"Brother Hansen," said the justice, "you are accused of stealing water."

"Who says so?" demanded Hansen.

"Swenson says he was only fifty yards away when you stole that water and he seen you. Larsen was only sixty yards away and he says he seen you."

"Dey are bot liars. Dey vas two hundred yards away vhen I steal that water!" (Johnson, 9).

Requested by the bishop to open the meeting with prayer, one brother took advantage of the opportunity to lay his water complaint before the Heavenly Powers. He said, ". . . and bless dis congregation, each and every vun. Dat is, I mean, except Brodder Christensen. Now, I don't mean Brodder Chris Christensen. I mean dat scalavag down on the ditch dat svipes my vater turn and dat is now sitting up dere in the choir" (Johnson, 9, adapted).

The peculiar beliefs and folkways of Mormon Country are also a favorite subject for Sanpete humor. Slow-talking Old Kesko was working at his farm on the highway near the pioneer cemetery, three miles north of town, when a stranger stopped to change a flat tire.

"I should have had this tire fixed back in Marony," said the stranger.

Kesko replied, "I haf never heard of such a place as Marony."

"You know, the next town up the road."

"Dat is *Moroni*. It is named after our engel."

"Oh," said the stranger, "I live in Los Angeles, the City of Angels."

"Ya," said Kesko, "but dat can be *any* engle. Ve know vhat vun our engel is." (Butler, 86-87, adapted)

The "peculiar institution" of plural marriage also provided occasion for Mormon humor. It was, of course, a difficult challenge to maintain harmonious relationships in a polygamous family. One old Sanpete brother, however, achieved such a scrupulous fairness in his dealings with his two wives that not even the most critical observer could find fault. He built houses for each wife that were exactly the same size and furnished identically. If one wife got a new dress, so did the other. And so it went throughout many years. Eventually, though, one wife and then the other passed away and was buried in the old Ephraim cemetery with a space left between them for their husband's grave. In the fulness of time, he too slipped into his final illness. As he was drawing near death, he whispered one last request to the bishop: "When you bury me, please tilt me a little towards Tillie" (Lee).

The period known in Mormon history as "the Raid" drove many polygamists into hiding to escape prosecution. As in other sections of Utah, there are still houses in Sanpete County with secret chambers that were used as hiding places. Tradition holds that Church President John Taylor hid out for several weeks in the Ephraim home of Canute Peterson. One story tells of a deputy U.S. marshal who had searched in vain for a particular man and finally stepped inside the meetinghouse to rest for a moment. The meeting was just ending, and one of the brethren was delivering a lengthy benediction in which he asked the Lord's blessing on various and sundry Church officials. He concluded with, "And oh, bless Brodder Peterson, and conceal him from his enemies. You know vich vun I mean. Brodder Peterson who is hiding out in Brodder Yensen's potato cellar" (Butler, 135).

Lead Pencil Peterson unsuccessfully attempted the same ruse used in ancient times by Abraham.

> The marshals found him out working in his field and said, "Are you Brother Peterson?"
>
> "Ya."
>
> "Well, we've got a warrant for your arrest for having more than one wife."
>
> Lead Pencil replied, "Oh, dere is some mistake because my second vife, she is my sister." (Butler, 136-37)

Lead Pencil acquired his nickname because he was always jotting down notes with a pencil on a little pad that he carried. Once an observer commented on his fine hand and asked where he had learned to write so neatly. Answered Lead Pencil, "Oh, oh, goot hell, it vas vhen I vas in de pen, in de pen. Ve had it so goot, so goot. Ve had it so goot. I sat right across the table from President George Q. Cannon' (Butler, 136).

The widespread lay participation in LDS worship services frequently led to humorous situations, especially when, as in early Sanpete County, people were struggling to express their thoughts and feelings in a language they have not entirely mastered. One of H. Z. Lund's favorite stories mimics a funeral sermon delivered in the old Ephraim tabernacle:

> De bishop have asked me to speak de funeral sermon of Brodder Christensen. I don't know anyting dat vill gif me so much joy. It vas but yesterday he vas skedaddling around here full of wim and witality, but now all dat is before us is de old carcass. It is only de shell—de nut have flew de coop.
>
> He became afflicted wit de summer complaint in de dead of vinter. It seemed for a time he vould recruit, but he suffered a prolapse and vent to his happy hunting ground vhere dere is no pain or tears—or Vord of Visdom. Brodder Christensen vas spiritually minded. He testified dat he had peered into de great behind. He loved de Gospel more dan anyting in de vorld—except his young second vife. Vhen I tink of his example, I am more and more committed to dat great principle, de immorality of de soul, vhich he has practiced all his life. O grave, vhere is Victoria? O death, vhere is dy stinger? (Butler, 100-01, adapted)

One of Woodruff Thomson's best stories recounts the time when Long Peter rose to his feet in testimony meeting and said,

> My brudders and sisters, I vant to bear you my testimony about the efficacy of prayer. Lo, not long ago I vent up in the mountains to get a load of poles. Now I had me a nice big load and I vas coming down the dugvay dere. And you brodders and sisters know how de dugvay goes down suddenly. Now I had that big load of poles and I vas coming down, and I turned around to put on the brake when I noticed the brake locks had fallen off and I had no brakes, and I had already started down the hill. Now I knew de horses couldn't hold that big load. And I knew dat if dey got down near the end dat somevun might be coming up de road, and somevun might be hurt and I knew dat my horses might get hurt in this. My brodders and sisters, I prayed dat no vun vould be coming up the road, so no vun vould be hurt, and I prayed that my vagon vouldn't get broken all up because I couldn't afford a new vun. And I prayed, brodders and sisters, dat my horses vouldn't be hurt. And den I got up and followed down trough the dust and vay down dere in de flat place at de bottom of de hill dere stood my horses still half hitched to the vagon. The vagon was behind dem and de vagon hadn't been broken. And nobody had come up the road so nobody had been hurt. And my horses hadn't been hurt—ah, vun of dem had a little bit of a scratch on his left fetlock and vas bleeding yust a little bit. Vell, brodders and sisters, only my harness vas broken. Vell, you see, brodders and sisters, I hadn't prayed for de harness. (Peterson, 59-60, adapted)

Another elderly Dane delivered an impassioned sermon on the end of the world: "Brodders and Sisters, in de last days, vhen de sun is darkened, and de stars fall out of de heavens, and de moon is turned to blood, vhere vill you be? I tell you vhere I vill be. I vill be vit de ten virgins" (Butler, 123, adapted).

Bert Wilson has observed that a major theme of Mormon folklore is "the great struggle to overcome self. The Mormon church demanded a perfection of its members that few, if any, ever reached. Thus, many of the stories treat humorously the failures of frail human beings to do what they know to be right" (165).

Jens Jensen was a big-hearted man and well liked in the community but was seldom seen at church, largely because of his one major fault of swearing:

> The bishop came to him and said, "Jens, you should come to church. Come up to church." And Jens finally came up. It happened to be testimony meeting, and all of his old friends were popping up giving their testimony, and Jens finally got nerve enough.
>
> He stood up, got started and said, "Oh, good hell, I can't do it." And he sat down; so right after church the bishop came up and pats him on the shoulder. "You are doing all right, Jens. Now the only thing the matter with you is you swear a little too much. Especially you should not swear in church."
>
> "Well," he says, "Bishop, you do a hell of a lot of preaching and I do a hell of a lot of swearing, but neither one of us means a damn thing by it." (Butler, 127)

"Wheat Sack" Olsen got his nickname after the bishop approached him for a donation to the building fund. He responded that he was so broke he could not afford to contribute even a penny.

> "But, Brother Olsen," the bishop said, "you have raised more wheat this year than anyone else in town and sold it at a good price."
>
> "That's yust de trouble," Olsen replied. "Yust tink vhat dose veat sacks cost me!" (Jensen, 4, adapted).

One old Danish brother who apparently fell somewhat short of the required standard received the traditional warning to sinners in a dream-vision of the hereafter:

> I dreamt I vent up to St. Peter—or Yens Peter—vich vun is it now? And he said to me, "You can't come in here. You go down dere on de left side. You been on dat side all your life." Vell, I vent down de stairs and opened de door and vent in. You can say vhateffer you care to, but if dat vasn't heaven I neffer expect to experience it again. Dere vas effrey friend I had and not von enemy. Vhat a celebration ve had! I neffer saw time go so qvick. Vhen de red light come on for me to come back up, I neffer vas so sorry I vasn't dead. Of course, it vas a little bit hot down dere, but who cares about de veather if you can be vit your friends? (Butler, 91-92, adapted)

Word of Wisdom stories abound in the Sanpete humor tradition, with a particular emphasis on the difficulty experienced by the Danes in giving up coffee. Two Danish Mormon converts had come from the same village, crossed the ocean on the same ship, and settled, one of them in Ephraim and the other in Moroni. They visited frequently back and forth, and on each occasion comforted themselves with a good cup of coffee. On one visit, the Ephraimite arrived in Moroni during church time and entered the meetinghouse for the remainder of the meeting. He discovered that his friend was speaking on the assigned topic of the Word of Wisdom. After the usual denunciations of strong drink, tobacco, and tea, the speaker had just declared, "I do not drink coffee . . ." when he caught sight of his old friend seated at the back of the chapel. "Vell," the speaker conceded, "I do take a cup of coffee vonce in a vhile. But *it don't boil!*" (Johnson, 37, adapted).

One of Woodruff Thomson's classic stories tells of Hat Steenie and Little Sister Hansen, who are sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee while they listen to general conference on the radio. President Heber J. Grant is giving one of his Word of Wisdom sermons, and finally Sister Hansen becomes somewhat uncomfortable.

> "Vell, Hat Steenie, maybe ve should stop

> drinking de coffee."
>
> "I don't know," the other replies doubtfully. "I don't know."
>
> "Maybe," Sister Hansen offers, "ve could change to de kind dat has de caffeine taken out."
>
> "I don't know," says Hat Steenie. "I tink President Grant vould still say dat is a sin, and if I am going to sin I vould rather sin vit de Hills Brodders." (Peterson, 57, adapted)

The earthy LDS general authority J. Golden Kimball was a great favorite in Sanpete County because he frankly shared the people's frailties. A Petie Bishop story tells of a conference visit Brother Kimball made to Ephraim. He stayed the night at the stake president's home and awoke in the morning feeling somewhat under the weather.

> So grandmother said, "Well, Brother Golden, is there anything we can do to help you, to make you feel better?"
>
> "Well," he said, "I tell you, Sister Peterson, I would like a good cup of coffee." So she made some coffee and served three cups to Brother Kimball and he seemed to perk right up.
>
> He went to the Sunday School convention, and the stake Sunday School president announced, "Brothers and Sisters, the theme of this convention is the Word of Wisdom. I think it would be a good idea to have a vote and have all those arise who haven't had coffee or tea this morning. Will you please arise."
>
> He turned around and Brother Kimball was sitting down. He said, "Stand up, Brother Golden."
>
> "I can count them just as easy sitting down." (Butler, 125-26, adapted)

The battle of the sexes is another rich source of humor. Sanpete County women were proverbial for their industriousness. Most of the men were probably hard workers as well, but there was the occasional lazy husband who took advantage of his long-suffering wife. Woodruff Thomson tells of Sister Poulson, who honored her husband's patriarchal authority:

> Many is de time dat Pol vould vaken me very yently and tell me, "Dortea, it's time to milk de cows." And ven I got the chores done he vould meet me at de door yust like a Patriarch and gif me his blessing before I make de breakfast. Ve haf tirteen children. Fater he belief in dat part of de Gospel dat say to multiply and blemish the eart" (Peterson, 37).

Another version of this story, told by Lulu Peterson Sargent, carries the satire further:

> And I vill never forget the day I vas out pitching hay, and I run de pitchfork yust through my thumb, and I come in and how dey hurt! And dere vas Papa right in dat rocking chair so handy. He yumped up qvick and grabbed my hand and say, "Mama, vat is it?" And he said, "Get de goose oil and clean rag and pillow slip." Den he wrapped it up, and oh! he patted my hand and kissed it. He said it vas such a pretty hand.
>
> And so I sat down for a little vhile and den I got up and said, "Vell, Papa, I tink I better go out and finish vit de hay."
>
> And he stands up yust like de patriarch dat he vas. "No sir, Mama, you don't need to go out today. Dat hay can vait until tomorrow." (Butler, 139-40, adapted)

Woodruff Thomson remarks on gender roles in his own family: "Grandpa Thomson was surely helpful. He was awfully good to Grandma all the time. He would always catch the sheep and hold them while she sheared them." He also recalls, "When father couldn't get home [from work] mother would have to milk the cows. One time Grandpa had come down and he was down to the corral and mother had a bad back anyway and was carrying two big pails of milk. He said, 'Dastine, das too bad you haf to carry all dat milk,' as he walked along beside her" (Peterson, 98).

The counterpart to the oppressed wife with a lazy husband is the beleaguered husband with a nagging wife. Sanpete humor captures this situation in a series of death jokes. A friend who had just returned to town after an extended absence said to Yappafoot Frandsen, "I was sorry to hear that you buried your wife." "Vell," Yappa replied, "I had to. She vas dead" (Butler, 150, adapted). Brother Frandsen remarried only three months after his wife's passing. "One of his friends said, 'Vell, Yappa, how is it dat you marry so soon.' And he says, 'Vell, I am not vun who holds a grudge'" (Peterson, 75, adapted).

Another old Dane was frequently asked to assist at funerals, but finally had to decline:

> Vell, my neighbor come over and say, "My vife has yust passed on, and I vould like you to be polar bear at de funeral." I tell him I vould like to help out but I yust cannot. I vas polar bear at Brodder Peterson's vife's funeral. I vas polar bear at Brodder Hansen's vife's funeral. I vas polar bear at Broder Yensen's vif's funeral. I yust cannot be polar bear again until I can return de compliment. (Peterson, 51)

When thrifty Brother Yergensen's wife died, the Relief Society sisters came to help him choose the material for her burial clothes. Of one sample, he said, "It looks all right, but vill it *vear?*" (Johnson 18, adapted).

The local undertaker in Ephraim for many years was Otto G. When he first acquired an automobile hearse to replace his horse-drawn hearse, he hurried home and said excitedly to his wife, "Come out, I vant you should be de first to ride in my new hearse." On another occasion, Otto G. remarked to the postmaster, "Vell, I don't vish people any harm. I only vish business vould pick up a little." This wish was amply rewarded during the great Spanish flu epidemic that followed the First World War, leading Otto G. to yet another thought-provoking observation: "You know, Don, dere are people dying now dat haf never died before" (Peterson, 83-84).

And so Sanpete County humor covers life from birth to death. A hard to answer question is how vital and alive the tradition is today. As Sanpete residents move further and further from their immigrant roots, the primary material of the distinctive humor grows more and more remote. Almost certainly, there are fewer active storytellers today than there were fifty years ago. Will another generation lose touch with the dialect humor tradition altogether? A recent event may provide some indication. A Wasatch Front civic club organized a weekend excursion to Sanpete County and sought some distinctive local after-dinner entertainment. They were offered cowboy poetry. One would think that in Sanpete County it could at least have been sheepherder poetry.

EDWARD A. GEARY is a Professor of English at Brigham Young University. He presented this paper at the Association for Mormon Letters conjoint session, Rocky Mountains Modern Language Association, 17 October 1997, Denver.

WORKS CITED

Butler, Lucille Johnson. "Ephraim's Humor." M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1950.

Christensen, James Boyd. "Function and Fun in Utah-Danish Nicknames." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39 (Winter 1971): 23-29.

Jensen, Chris. "My Funny Home Town." *Ford Times*. February 1961, 2-5. (A magazine published by Ford Motor Company)

Johnson, Grace. *Brodders and Sisters: Being the early life and times of the Mormon town of Ephraim, Sanpete County, Utah and Including, to be sure, the famous* "EPHRAIM STORIES." Manti, UT: Messenger-Enterprise Printing Co., 1973.

Lee, Hector. "J. Golden Kimball Stories, Together with the Brother Petersen Yarns." Huntington, VT: Folk-Legacy Records, 1964.

Lee, Hector, and Royal Madsen. "Nicknames of the Ephraimites." *Western Humanities Review* 3 (1949): 12-22.

Mathews, Tom. "The Funniest Town in Utah," *Salt Lake Tribune Magazine*. January 8, 1950.

Peterson, Susan. "Ephraim Stories." 1972. Unpublished manuscript. Brigham Young University Folklore Archives, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Sorensen, Virginia. "Where Nothing Is Long Ago." *Where Nothing Is Long Ago: Memories of a Mormon Childhood.* New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963.

Wilson, William A. "Folklore of Utah's Little Scandinavia." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47 (1979): 148-66.

A Man Caught in the Middle: J. Golden Kimball as a Transitional Figure in Mormon History and Folklore

Eric A. Eliason

> Have I not been frank and honest and clear in my statements? I may not have a perfect and true conception of God, but I love God; I love him for his perfection; I love him for his mercy; I love him for his justice; and notwithstanding my many weaknesses I am not afraid to meet him. For I know that he will deal justly by me; and the great joy I will have is that he will understand me and that is more than some of you have been able to do. I believe with the same love and faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world. I believe that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, and there is no man living who reads the things that God has revealed through the Prophet, and the sayings of the Prophet with more joy and more satisfaction and more happiness than I have. —Elder J. Golden Kimball (205)

I would like to begin with a disclaimer.[1] I know of no way to discuss J. Golden Kimball stories without offending someone. I can either repeat the stories just as I heard them from Mormon folks and offend people with the use of "hell" and "damn" in not-necessarily theological contexts, or I can excise such language and use euphemisms that would anger those who prefer their J. Golden stories pure and undefiled.

The solution I have devised is to leave in the "hells" and "damns"—which have become canonical features of the oral narrative cycle even though they did not appear in J. Golden's own speech nearly as much as they appear attributed to him in stories about him. Anything stronger than this, I have euphemized it for sensitive listeners. (Actually, I don't think I have used anything stronger. But if I did I would euphemize.) I know not everyone will be pleased, but that's that.

My purpose here is not to offend anyway but to talk about an important figure in the Latter-day Saint experience in a way that is wholesomely entertaining and illustrative of his place and function in Mormon cultural life. In comprehending the J. Golden Kimball phenomenon, it is useful to distinguish between the Elder Kimball of history and the J. Golden of folklore. We can know Elder Kimball through reading his sermons, interviewing those who knew him, and consulting historical documents contemporary with his life. We know J. Golden through stories and jokes passed on in the LDS oral tradition. Of course, the J. Golden Kimball of folklore is inspired by, and bears a certain similarity to, his historical relative. Nevertheless, the J. Golden of folklore is in many ways a different person. The things he says may or may not relate to historically verifiable events or utterances. The Elder Kimball of history passed away in 1938, but the J. Golden of folklore is alive and well and with us still.

It is difficult to determine whether the Mormons who circulate J. Golden Kimball stories accept them as accurate representations of what really happened, or if they understand them to be as generally fictitious as any other class of jokes. I suspect that most often in the telling and hearing of J. Golden Kimball stories, evaluations of "historical truth" take a back seat to simply enjoying the humor. Genuine and spurious "Goldenisms" would die out equally fast if they ever stopped resonating with the concerns of contemporary Mormons. Likewise, genuine and spurious Goldenisms will continue to thrive, intermixed and indistinguishable as long as they mean something to the people who tell them. These stories do not circulate because they are historically true but because they are culturally true in serving the psychological, cultural, and religious needs of the people among whom they are found.

Because so many years have passed since his death and because so few of those who actually heard him speak are still alive, one might assume that J. Golden Kimball lore is dying out. I found little evidence for this assumption and had no trouble collecting numerous stories from the mouths of living Mormon story tellers. It may well be the case that the body and frequency of J. Golden Kimball folklore has even grown with the receding of the actual events of his life into the mists of the past-and with the growth of the Church having made for more potential confabulators, tellers, and hearers.

Today J. Golden Kimball is no longer merely a figure of Mormon folklore. With numerous books, cassette tapes, video cassettes, and one-man plays by James Arrington and James N. Kimball portraying Brother Golden, he has entered Mormon popular culture as well (Arrington 1988, 1992). The J. Golden Kimball of LDS popular culture operates in symbiosis with the J. Golden Kimball of LDS folklore. Popular entertainers absorb the oral tradition and speed up and multiply its reentry into the stream of oral transmission. Affirming their nature as folklore, J. Golden Kimball stories circulate mostly outside official avenues of communication in settings where Mormons are gathered together. They are rarely told over the pulpit and are noticeably scarce in official Church publications-even though Church leaders Spencer W. Kimball and Franklin D. Richards were fond of them and there are several instances of J. Golden stories told in general conference.

In this paper, I am mainly concerned with the "Uncle Golden" who helped us make some difficult adjustments as a people. Those Saints from the Mountainwest whose parents and grandparents knew the living man remember Elder Kimball's struggles with swearing and with the beverage proscriptions in the Word of Wisdom. The man was much more than these aspects of his personality, but they are highlighted in the folklore about him and therefore deserve some explanation.

These struggles reflected his situation in a time of great change in Church history. During the time of Elder Kimball's service as a Church leader, from his 1886 ordination as a Seventy to his death in 1938, Mormons, like many Americans, were in the throes of metamorphosing from a pioneer to a modern people. Without mentioning Elder Kimball, historian Thomas Alexander identifies the period of 1890-1930 as one of the most significant eras of change in Church history in his important work *Mormonism in Transition*, a period that coincides almost exactly with J. Golden Kimball's tenure as a General Authority.

The complex effects that this metamorphosis of Mormon society had on the Mormon people are some of the major themes in the J. Golden Kimball legend cycle. J. Golden's father, Heber C. Kimball, and the prophet to whom he was a counselor, Brigham Young, were similarly said to dip into colorful vocabulary from time to time. A famous example is Heber C. Kimball's alleged response to suggestions that he pray for the enemies of the Church. "Sure I'll pray for our enemies! I pray that they may all go to hell" (Stegner, 191-92). But Brother Brigham and Brother Heber were men of a different era under a different set of cultural expectations.

Pop etymologist of American English usage Stuart Flexner goes so far as to suggest that nineteenth-century Mormons invented and contributed to American English such exclamations as "by hell" and "Oh my hell," as alternatives to similar blasphemous language that used the name of the Lord in vain (462; Flexner does not provide references for this claim so it must be taken as speculation at best). Today, Utah's polite society considers even these mild substitutes too strong. Among Utah LDS teens in particular, the unique and even more euphemistic regional expletive "Oh my heck" now holds sway. Not being noteworthy for the time, early nineteenth-century Mormon swearing goes relatively unremembered by contemporary Latter-day Saints.

Not so for Brother Golden's turn-of-the-century discourse in a time of transition. Golden's outdoor-loving mule-skinner background sometimes chafed against the domestication of the West and the LDS Church. His heart was willing but his mouth was tardy to catch on that swearing over the pulpit was no longer acceptable. "Where I come from 'hell' and 'damn' are not swearing, They are geography," he supposedly said. Providing an interesting defense of his friend and expressing sentiments probably not shared by all his brethren, Ben E. Rich, president of the Southern States Mission, said in the October 1905 General Conference:

> I know I am looked upon as very radical. In fact, it is said that Brother Golden Kimball and myself swear once in a while. I think that if Jesus would come here He would express His opinion of some people in almost similar language to that used sometimes by Brother Golden Kimball. (71)

Let me read some examples collected by folklore students over the years of J. Golden Kimball stories where the humor emerges from surprising use of language.

> J. Golden Kimball was riding on a stagecoach somewhere in Missouri. A group of men were riding along with him, and they began to complain about the Mormons. Apparently, they didn't realize a Mormon was among them. One man said he hated the Mormons with a passion, thus he was going to Texas to get away from them. Another man said he was going to Kentucky to get away from the Mormons. And finally, a third man said he was going to Boston to get away from all the "blank" Mormons. J. Golden Kimball then said, "You can all just go to Hell, because there won't be any Mormons there." (student, male, West Lafayette, Indiana, 1986, warming up the congregation)

> Brother Kimball stood up to speak before a noisy congregation who, as much as he cleared his throat, would not settle down. So he hollered through the microphone, "Go to hell!" This got their attention. He continued, "Go to hell and you will find many people who are dissatisfied with their condition and wish they would have lived their mortal lives differently. It is on avoiding this situation that I would like to focus my remarks today." (professor, male, Provo, Utah, 1998)

According to stories told about him, J. Golden did not exactly charge ahead at the forefront of change as the Church began to regard the Word of Wisdom as a divine commandment rather than an inspired suggestion. Though far from alone among members of the Church at this time, as one of the Church's Seven Presidents of the Seventy, he was expected to lead by example. Here are some examples of stories having to do with the Word of Wisdom:

> J. Golden went to a restaurant with a few of the senior members of the Quorum of the Twelve. After they sat down, they all ordered Postum-a foul-tasting but Word-of-Wisdom-approved herbal coffee substitute. Once the apostles were engaged in conversation with each other and their attention was distracted, J. Golden whispered to their waitress, "Why don't you put some real coffee in my Postum?" When the waitress returned with the brethren's orders, she loudly asked, "Okay, who was it who wanted coffee in their Postum?" (English professor, male, Provo, Utah, 1997)

> He always like to eat his lunches downtown in Salt Lake City, at the Rotisserie. He liked to eat with a group of lawyers. And on this particular day he was seated at the end of the table, and the lawyers were seated around the table. The waiter came to his end to take Brother Golden's order first, and the waiter wrote the order down and then said, "What will you drink?" Now a good member of the Church was not supposed to drink tea or coffee, and so Brother Golden said, "Water." Someone next to him said to the waiter, "Oh, he likes coffee. Bring him coffee." So the waiter put down coffee, and Brother Golden watched him and didn't say a word until the waiter got to the other end of the table, and then he said, "The Lord heard me say water!" (male, Chico, California, 1950)

J. Golden had unwavering devotion to the Church and was sincerely and openly repentant about the embarrassment he sometimes caused. This humble aspect of Brother Golden's personality further endeared him to Church members and kept him out of serious trouble with his colleagues who always lovingly, but sometimes sharply, tried to get him to rein in his tongue. Mormons took courage, knowing that one of the Lord's anointed experienced struggles similar to their own and was nonetheless completely devoted to the kingdom of God.

J. Golden was not the rebel who is sometimes heard in the quip attributed to him: "They can't cut me off from the Church. I repent too damn fast." Former LDS Church president Spencer W. Kimball—J. Golden Kimball's nephew by way of another of Heber C. Kimball's wives—suggested of the previous story, "Here is a great lesson, if it is correctly interpreted. There is never a day in any man's life when repentance is not essential to his well-being and eternal progress" (32).

J. Golden Kimball stories also reflect other important social transitions that have taken place during the twentieth century. Many chronicle his always frustrating, and sometimes near-death, encounters with the new technology of his time such as cars, telephones, and dangerous factory machinery.

> Mr. Cannon said that on one occasion he was talking with J. Golden Kimball on the corner of South Temple and Main in Salt Lake City by the Hotel Utah. As Kimball left Mr. Cannon to cross the street towards Z.C.M.I., he stepped into the path of an automobile which knocked him down but did not harm him. Kimball got up and returned to the Hotel Utah corner, and as he brushed himself [off] he said: "Some people's eye sight is so poor that they can't tell the Lord's anointed from the Gentiles!" (male, Los Angeles, California, 1947)

> J. Golden was said to have complained about the invention of the telephone because before, when he would speak in a town and say a few things he shouldn't have over the pulpit, it would take a few days to get back to the Brethren. By then he could find a way out of the trouble he caused. But with the telephone, the bad news would reach Salt Lake before he could even get there by train. (senior English major, female, Provo, Utah, 1997)

> This event took place at the Church-owned woolen mills which Brother Kimball had been instructed to visit, representing the First Presidency of the Church. Part of this gentleman's attire was a long frock coat which he always wore. As he was walking along discussing plant

> operations with his guide, his coat was accidentally caught on one of the machines, which began to pull him around so fast that he had to run as it pulled him around in circles. After being [dragged] around for about twelve revolutions, he was thrown to the floor. The young man who was showing him around the mill came running over and said, "Brother Kimball, speak to me! Speak to me!" He looked . . . straight in the eye, "I don't know why the hell I should. I passed you twelve times just now, and not once did you speak to me!" (librarian, female, Logan, Utah, 1964)

These jokes express the mixed feelings of delight and fear that people have commonly experienced in coming to terms with the popular inventions that transform their lives. A very few "Uncle Golden" jokes exhibit a mean streak toward women that is plainly unfunny by today's reasonable standards of political correctness but that was unfortunately very common in the early twentieth-century folk-humor of American males. One story in particular also addresses the difficult transition the Church was making away from plural marriage during J. Golden Kimball's lifetime:

> For approximately 20 years after the Church announced the termination of the practice of polygamy, there were still many problems with plural marriages, and especially in southern Utah. Around 1915, there occurred in southern Utah many more of these marriages of which the Church was not aware. By this time the Church looked upon polygamy as adultery and when word was received in Salt Lake City of the problem which existed in southern Utah, the General Authorities, of course, were very upset and concerned. They knew that the problem must be solved immediately and that the Saints in that area must be brought to the realization that adultery is a grievous sin. J. Golden Kimball was selected to travel to southern Utah to try and solve this problem for the Church. A special meeting was called for all the husbands and wives in that area to hear a General Authority from Salt Lake City talk about a serious problem in their area. Of course, most of the people attending knew what to expect as far as the subject matter for the evening, but little did they expect the treatment which was given that subject by J. Golden Kimball. J. Golden really captivated his audience and brought everyone to an equal understanding level when he began his speech with the following sentence: "If my wife looked like your wife, I'd commit adultery too." (student, male, Logan, Utah, 1964)

These stories all reflect the concerns of a people experience rapid and multiple kinds of social change. Perhaps most importantly from a literary perspective, as Margaret Baker points out, J. Golden Kimball is a transitional figure in the history of Mormon humor (2:664). Until J. Golden's pioneering wordsmithing, most humor about Mormons issued forth from Gentiles and was cruelly anti-Mormon in its ridicule of things Mormons held sacred and in its glee about the persecutions faced by the fledgling Church (Bunker and Bitton, 1-6). J. Golden Kimball's own humor, and the subsequent lore about him, were some of the first signs that sectarian strife had cooled enough, and LDS culture had matured enough, for Mormons to begin to self-confidently laugh at their own peculiarities. J. Golden Kimball represents, and by his words helped bring about, a coming of age in a maturing religious culture.

ERIC A. ELIASON presented this paper at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

NOTE

1. I should qualify these observations by noting that the extent of nineteenth-century Mormon swearing may have been overstated. During his visit to Utah, British explorer Richard Burton failed to find much evidence of the infamous swearing of Mormon leaders. Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (1861; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 290.

WORKS CITED

Alexander, Thomas G. *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints 1890-1930*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Arrington, James. *J. Golden*. Compact disk. Original release 1988. Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, 1997. Written and directed by James Arrington, starring Bruce Ackerman, contributing research compiled by James N. Kimball.

---. *J. Golden*. Video. Salt Lake City: James Arrington Productions, 1992. Written and directed by James Arrington, starring Dalin Christianson, video by Kevin Mitchell.

Baker, Margaret P. "Humor." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991.

Bunker, Gary L., and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834-1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983.

Flexner, Stuart. *Listening to America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

Kimball, J. Golden. Collection, Folklore Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Kimball, J. Golden. [Address.] *Conference Report of the Ninetieth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1919.

Kimball, Spencer W. *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969.

Rich, Ben E. [Address.] *Conference Report of the Seventy-Sixth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1905.

Stegner, Wallace. *Mormon Country*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942.

And the Bishop Only Laughed: Intellectuality, Irreverence, and Light-Mindedness in Neal Chandler's Anti-Hero Damon Boulder

Helynne H. Hansen

When encountering Neal Chandler's collection of short stories in *Benediction*, LDS academics may not know whether to howl with laughter or to sigh in sympathy over the plight of one of his recurring characters, the liberal, scholarly, much-beleaguered, but still faithful Damon Boulder.

With his boldly honest writing style and good-natured wit, Chandler leads the irreverent, though endearing Boulder through three stories in his 1989 anthology, describing how his unwilling anti-hero must endure a series of bizarre but amusing adventures by virtue of his unapologetic stand as a Mormon intellectual and nonconformist.

Boulder first appears in "Benediction." "The Righteousness Hall of Fame" and "Thelma in the Sky with Diamonds," follow his frustrating *contretemps* with LDS hierarchy, businessmen, and social events for singles as well as Boulder's own struggle to cope with some basic disappointments in his personal life. The amusing, if frustrating thread that runs through these stories is Boulder's seemingly "light-minded" responses to some of the happenings around him. Chandler illustrates vividly how his protagonist acts as he does—not out of disrespect for sacred things, but rather out of disdain for the silly, pretentious, and superficial manner in which they tend to be presented and interpreted.

As "Benediction" describes him, Boulder is a classics professor at a local university and, until recently, his ward's Gospel Doctrine teacher. He possesses a great deal of "uncorrelated" knowledge of the New Testament and is also the only person in the stake who reads Greek. An insightful, enthusiastic, and somewhat theatrical Sunday School instructor, Boulder recently has been released from that position "in prospect of a weightier assignment," which never comes (31). Actually, he is released, not because he failed to teach the New Testament lessons correctly, but because of his ecumenical and intellectual efforts to make accurate historical and spiritual sense of them.

The bewildered young bishop had reluctantly supported Boulder's unconventional approach to Sunday School teaching, which generally "spurned the authorized lesson plan" (29). Boulder never uses the lesson manual. In fact, he can't even remember its name and has no idea of its whereabouts, except that perhaps it might be "somewhere in the car" (29). The bishop capitulates, however, when a very vocal group of several indignant Gospel Doctrine class members pay a late-night visit to his house to complain. One member states that Boulder's lessons "were taken largely from whatever obscure, uncorrelated, probably even foreign and idolatrous book he happened to be poring over at the time . . . [and that] raw, or unmanaged, uncorrelated knowledge was not unlike raw weather, or raw language, or, for that matter, raw sewage. It posed a serious environmental hazard, in this case to the fragile spiritual ecology of the ward" (29).

The bishop had tried to shift Boulder from teaching into "nearly every thinkable kind of position" (30), but it never seemed to work out. As a temporary Boy Scout leader, Damon had taken the entire troop skinny-dipping in the pond at the stake farm. As a ward clerk, he had creatively subverted statistical reports by filling them in with random numbers. As a ward in-service leader, he had presented a ninety-minute reading from the *Journal of Discourses* with a theatricality appreciated only by himself. During a brief stint on the ward building committee, he had written a fun-poking letter of complaint to the Church Building Committee in Salt Lake City asking for an improved meetinghouse plan, which resulted in a serious dressing-down of his bishop by a "very angry stake president." The ward leader had even toyed with the idea of calling Boulder to the bishopric but suspected he would accept the calling, then "celebrate by growing a full beard" (30).

Boulder, then, is dumped from Sunday School—the one position to which his intellectuality and personality were best-suited—and replaced by the young, fresh-faced Kevin Houston. The new and approved Gospel Doctrine teacher, who is also a top executive in a pyramid sales company, plays to a "standing room sell-out" (27) at the next four Sunday School classes. Nevertheless, the new teacher's shallow and rather condescending teaching style is an ideal example of what Marvin Chisolm, Boulder's only defender and champion, calls the "Koolaidization of Mormon theology" (29). The self-assured Brother Houston speaks with "the accumulated ecclesiastical jargon of four generations"; and his voice, as Chisolm further observes, has "the perfect grain and color of simulated walnut Formica" (32).

Hurt by his release and by no means unaware of the true reasons behind it, Boulder stays away from the new class and its now-packed audience for the first month. Finally returning to Sunday School out of sheer curiosity, he not only finds himself a conspicuous outsider in the class but also quickly sees that he is awash in an existential sea of absurdity.

Houston begins the lesson by arrogantly harassing class members. "'So you gotta follow the brethren? . . . Is that right, Brother Zimmer? . . . Ya gotta follow the brethren?' Again Kevin whined the sentence out in a minor third so nasal and obnoxious that a newborn infant would have recognized it as a taunt" (32). He asks the class for background on the Apostle Peter.

> "FISHERMAN? . . . You mean he didn't have a Ph.D. in religion? . . . Why, next you'll be trying to tell me he wasn't even an intellectual, that he was some sort of simple, honest working man. Well, well. Well, well. Well, well." He spoke his "wells" in melodic pairs and crossed back to the other side of the room. (36)

Boulder stays silent as Houston, bouncing a piece of chalk in his up-turned, cupped palm, paints Peter as a "pretty darn good business man . . . [who] had a savings program. Made sound investments . . . took care of his family, who got ahead in business" (36). However, when Houston borrows Boulder's tactic of analyzing word origins, and compares Peter's personality to a "rock," Boulder accepts the challenge to comment. "As to this particular title, well, I really don't think it was a product of financial analysis, Kevin, nor of character analysis for that matter . . . . [Peter] didn't show himself to be much of a rock, now did he? The man was almost fatally impulsive" (38).

Boulder describes Peter as more of a politician:

> Somebody had to mediate between those pureblooded Jewish hard-liners up in Jerusalem and Paul and his liberal rabble in Rome. No easy task, you can be sure, and no one to set them apart for it, but he carried it off like a ward politician and consummate pragmatism. . . . I was only wondering out loud and at Brother Houston's invitation, of course—if perhaps in retrospect "Simon Politikos" (Simon the Politician) might not have been a more accurate title, and consequently, higher praise. (39)

His comment has an effect, the spell by which Houston held the class dissipates, and members become restless. Houston grabs control again, however, by insisting that the name "Peter" is significant. He begins comparing the Apostle Peter to Sylvester Stallone's screen persona Rocky (after all, the Greek "petros" means "little stone"). He writes the name *Rocky* on the board and circles it in yellow. "There's something special about that name, isn't there, something out of the ordinary? We don't just give that name to children. In fact, we associate it with tough guys, with fighters, and with a special kind of indomitable spirit" (42).

Even as Chisolm turns desperately to Boulder with a fierce, "for-heaven's-sake-do-something!" expression, Houston winds down his metaphor. "He told them the parable of 'Rocky,' the difficult core of an ancient story made plain and simple in the bright, allegorical shell of a new one. He showed them the Hebrew fisherman as a secret, inspiring foreshadow of the tenacious Italian Stallion, the triumphant Philadelphian in vivid similitude of the intrepid Galilean" (42).

When Houston asks Boulder to say the benediction on the class, the scholar tries to contain himself but ultimately cannot. His "prayer" turns into a rousing cheer, joined only by Chisolm, the naive full-time missionaries, and their even more naive female investigator: "Give me an 'R . . . O . . . C-K-Y . . . ' YYYEEEE-AAAAAA ROCKEEEEEEEEEY" (45).

A shocked class member immediately scuttles to the bishop's office to describe Boulder's "benediction." The ward clerk, arriving at her heels, "found the bishop swaying precariously on his loudly squeaking, vinyl swivel chair, great round tears streaming down his flushed and helpless face. To the alarmed clerk he seemed out of control, as if he were suffering some terrible seizure, some convulsive and almost wanton attack of hysteria" (46).

Thus ends the first short story about Damon Boulder. Whether or not readers find his flouting of the sacred institution of the closing prayer amusing, it is interesting that the bishop, even hearing about it second-hand, lapses into hysteria rather than into the expected snit of righteous indignation. The bishop's reaction suggests that light-mindedness and laughter function here not only as stress-busters, but also as a reality check that might sooner or later point the way back from pomposity and silliness to more sane, solid, instructional ground.

"Humor is therapeutic," states Richard Cracroft in his article "The Humor of Mormon Seriousness." "It can be a safety valve, particularly in a tight and demanding society which is directed by a strong hierarchy of leaders who say we should beware of humor" (17). The principal challenge of poking fun at serious Mormon topics is to assert some creative individuality and to make a point about something bogus or awry, while still defending—or at least not deprecating—the faith. Since humor is temporal, a reaction to absurdities in all walks of life, there is a possibility that it may turn a caustic eye on practices or concepts that we normally would hold sacred. As Cracroft says, such humor "may be a threat to the ideal of the group, or the Church, a very worldly response to a very worldly world" (15).

Not surprisingly, then, Boulder must pay a price. He is quickly relegated to his ward's blacklist for the crime of earthly light-mindedness toward heavenly things. However, his guilt is misunderstood. His seeming irreverence signals not so much a cavalier attitude about sacred practices so much as it makes a plea to the masses to elevate their perspective on the gospel to more cerebral, and thereby more viable, ground. His argument is not with any aspect of the mission or the persona of the Apostle Peter but rather with the instructor's maddening insistence on sugar-coating—or "Koolaid-izing"—Peter's life and times by deliberately twisting them into a pop-culture metaphor.

Though Boulder delivered the "Rocky prayer" in a burst of exasperation, there might well have been a glimmer of hope behind it—a hope that some of the brighter and/or more discerning Sunday School students somehow might see it as valid criticism of turgid, fatuous teaching techniques that insult the intelligence. The next step might be that some class members could begin to ponder the value of approaching the scriptures with more respect for the historical and spiritual context in which they were given.

In the next story, the sharply satirical "The Righteousness Hall of Fame," several months have passed since Boulder's rendering of the "Rocky cheer" prayer, and he is still feeling like a social outcast, based on the reaction of various Gospel Doctrine students who, apparently, did not get the message to retreat to higher intellectual ground and definitely did not share the bishop's sense of mirth.

Furthermore, certain prominent, successful members of Boulder's stake have decided to take the scholar into their own hands in an effort to temper his bombastic nonconformity with flattery and money, thereby squelching any future individualist outbursts. Freedom's Holy Light Foundation, bankrolled by prominent and wealthy local Latter-day Saints, sees itself as a "first-rate, executive-class corporate training center for the doctrines of righteousness . . . a Fortune 500 with massive training budgets, incentive programs, executive furloughs, [and] community outreach" (105-06). Housed in an elegant office complex, the foundation plans to award brass plaques and glossy photos to individuals whom it deems sufficiently worthy of recognition for conservative and commendable lifestyles.

The foundation members, one of whom is Boulder's stake president, want the professor on their staff full-time and are willing to pay him a substantial salary in exchange for "certain administrative duties" and a chance to research and write, ostensibly what he pleases (101). (Readers are not privy to the figure the stake president writes on a piece of paper and hands to Boulder, but we know it is sufficiently higher than his current university pay to make him sweat.) The stake president then continues:

> Now, some of us are aware, Brother Boulder, of an incident in the Sunday School last spring. Unfortunate. Truly unfortunate, but I think the problem is simple enough. A man like yourself, a sophisticated scholar and educator, is out of his element in a Sunday School class. There are people who don't understand these things. Milk before meat, as they say . . . We've got plenty of milkmen in the Church, don't we? . . . But where, I ask you . . . where can a man sit down and sink his teeth into a big juicy, prime American beefsteak?. . . . We are going to build us a real steak house . . . a millennial mansion for meat eaters, and Damon Boulder is going to be master of the menu, guru of the grill, presiding bishop of the barbecue. (101)

Boulder is not fooled by the foundation's intentions—to have, simultaneously, the prestige of a well-respected scholar on board and the opportunity, reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock—to keep that scholar "formulated, sprawling on a pin . . . pinned and wriggling on the wall" (503)—unable to express himself in any way but by the prescribed, narrow, and conservatively orthodox text of the corporate chieftains.

In this second story, we see no sardonic or sacrilegious behavior on Boulder's part. John Bennion, in his 1990 *Sunstone* review of *Benediction*, notes that the texture of this piece could have been richer if Boulder had attempted to "dramatically engage [the foundation members] in talk" (48) instead of reacting to them mostly through astonished silence. This is no doubt true. In fact, readers at this point are fairly *aching* for Boulder to deploy some articulate, well-barbed dialogue that will puncture this entire proposition, deflating its egregious phoniness and conceit.

Chandler's satire, however, functions equally effectively through this alternative tactic—that is, the protagonist's completely bewildered attitude, his incredulity that anything could be quite this preposterous. Boulder's calm comments come in small spurts. "It sounds almost too good to be true (102) . . . . you set up your Righteousness Hall of Fame for generals and general managers and general authorities (109) . . . . a very profitably not-for-profit business-school of the prophets, right?" (115). He does not argue, he only ponders, wary and nonplussed.

Despite the fact that Boulder remains skeptical and reserved about the proposition, the story's conclusion is unclear. Will this respected professor leave his university teaching job and take the foundation position with its inflated salary at the cost of his liberalism, his hard-earned intellectuality, and his tenacious grasp on his individuality? The question remains unanswered through the third story, "Thelma in the Sky with Diamonds." A short time has gone by since Boulder's meeting with the Freedom's Holy Light Foundation. As the story opens, he is reluctantly circulating at a Special Interest dance that a woman in his ward pressured him to attend. The humor in this last segment of the Boulder trilogy surfaces only lightly through the protagonist's sarcasm over the uncomfortable position of the Mormon single male. "There is an as yet undiscovered allergic malady latent in the married women of the Church, which is triggered by the sight or sound or perhaps it's just the smell of an unmarried man. It sends them wild. A kind of vicarious feeding frenzy. And the only way to cool down the mania is to give in to it. Or, at least, to appear to" (153).

As he meets and converses with the three-times-divorced, yet still lovely and uncynical Thelma Rydell, a sadder side of Boulder emerges. She is able to draw him out gently, as he unwillingly reveals the pain and festering anger associated with his long-past divorce, his estrangement from his only son, and the loneliness of his personal life.

"Thelma in the Sky with Diamonds" ends with readers not knowing if Boulder will give in to the financial temptation offered by "The Righteousness Hall of Fame." The only hint about his uncertainty is his confession to Thelma that he will not be able to afford the new car they are sitting in unless he changes his employment. "'Well, in fact, I am flirting with free enterprise, or more precisely, tax-free enterprise. But it's all very complex and improbable, and you really don't want to hear about it.' The truth was he didn't want to talk about it" (157).

Readers are left to speculate about whether Boulder will sell out or save his proud, if uncorrelated, integrity through his own willpower. Also, since the story ends on a short note of teasing erotica, we also now wonder if Thelma will play a part in helping him answer to the best within himself. Perhaps the allure of Chandler's ambiguous conclusion to Boulder's saga is that we readers simply do not know what will happen.

However, knowing Boulder as we do after reading these three stories, we suspect (and hope) that he will stay much the way he always has been. We even wish that there might be more "Rocky cheers" or something of that ilk in his future for whatever value they might have in inspiring members to pull certain follies and idiocies of daily or weekly Mormonism onto a more rational track.

"As long as Saints continue to be sinners who keep on trying, as long as we live, and thus make gaffes and goofs, humor will be a necessary restorative and corrective and blessing," says Cracroft (17). It is no doubt difficult to exist as and to remain a Damon Boulder in the medium of Mormon orthodoxy and its accompanying dim view of any kind of in-house levity. Nevertheless, those who are sufficiently courageous to inject LDS attitudes and practices with Damon Boulder-style tidbits of badinage, risibility, and farce may be helping their fellow Latter-day Saints more than hindering their progress along the road to greater spiritual knowledge and perception of things holy.

Bennion's review of *Benediction* ends with praise for the fact that "Chandler explores subjects which few Mormon writers touch, and in a manner which few dare." He continues, "The social satire is right on, revelatory. If I wish his plow had cut even deeper, I recognize that he is opening new and fertile soil" (49). To continue Bennion's metaphor about this story collection, the value of Chandler's plow is not so much its depth, but its width. It carves a bold and a refreshing swath of reality through a significant cross-section of topsoil in mainstream LDS fiction and humor. Readers can only hope that Chandler will bring back more chapters of Damon Boulder's saga that will witness to the fruits that his humor and audacity may have brought forth from this brave new ground. May Chandler continue to harvest more "light-minded" but therapeutic commentary from a terrain of Mormon literature that, before now, too often has been left fallow.

HELYNNE H. HANSEN is an assistant professor of modern languages at Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado, and a former visiting professor of French at Brigham Young University. She received her Ph.D. in French from the University of Utah. This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, Salt Lake City.

WORKS CITED

Bennion, John. "Review: *Benediction* by Neal Chandler." *Sunstone* 14.2 (April 1990): 47-49.

Chandler, Neal. *Benediction*. Salt Lake City: U of UP, 1989.

Cracroft, Richard H. "The Humor of Mormon Seriousness: A Celestial Balancing Act." *Sunstone* 10.1 (January 1986): 6-17.

Eliot, T. S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." *Norton Anthology of Poetry*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1970. 502-05.

Ann Edwards Cannon Takes On Motherhood, Martha Stewart, and Marriage

Patricia Truxler Coleman

I knew I would like Ann Cannon even before I met her. After all, I had had the pleasure of teaching many of her novels for young adults in my children's literature class at Westminster College, and both I and the students had loved the experience. Furthermore, I had it on good authority from a person at King's English (who shall remain nameless) that Ann Cannon had confided to her that, though she was not a violent person, were she to put out a contract on any single living human being it would be Martha Stewart. Now, when you are a working mother whose own mother makes Martha Stewart look like white trash and you have just begun preparations for a visit from your parents, you have to appreciate the humor here.

Then there was the wonderful and unforgettable address she delivered several years ago at this meeting when she was president of AML. Who can forget "the part about the soup isn't true" or her description of "that monument to jello architecture—rainbow jello"?

Finally, my teaching obligations took me much more in the direction of Shakespeare, Austen, Hardy, and regional women writers; and having no place in my schedule for the children's literature class, she signed on to do the course for Westminster. One night after she had agreed to do the course, she called me and said, "I don't mean to be pushy or anything, but am I actually going to get paid for this?" Now we all know that, for adjuncts—or as Westminster quaintly likes to call them—"professional temporary colleagues"—the answer to this kind of question is both yes and no. Of course she would get paid, if that's what you could call the salary she'd receive, but of course she wasn't going to get paid anything near what she was worth. She simply said, "Oh, I just wondered, because I am used to doing these kinds of things in other places for free." I won't name the institution involved.

Finally, there was the day she showed up at my house—only a few blocks from hers—to pick up some of the texts I had used or gotten as desk copies for the children's literature class. It was my first "just Ann and me" encounter. My husband and I had just downsized from a house that was way too big for us, our last child had just moved out, and we began to have the eerie feeling that if we didn't get a smaller house, they would actually start coming back! Ann walked in, looked around, and said, "My gosh, grown-ups live here!" I knew I had arrived. It was very near my fiftieth birthday, and I was beginning to think I ought to feel old when a woman ten years my junior looked at me and my house, not with despair, but with hope for her future. We had a grown-up conversation. She gathered the books and papers and started out the door.

Now I have always suspected that something happens to a woman during her first pregnancy. I know it did to my mother and me. A pregnant woman develops eyes in the back of her head, on her elbows, on her knees, and yes, even on her toes. How else do you explain that, without even bending over, your mother knows all the toys you were supposed to put away are under your bed? As Ann was walking down my porch stairs, she let out a whistle with two fingers and her lips—a whistle that would make a football referee who actually had one of those little metal things hanging from a chain around his neck proud. And I knew she had seen something.

Indeed, she had. Her oldest son was driving, windows down and stereo as loud as possible, rather speedily past my house. It's what I call the "male adolescent fertility rite of spring." I guess he had gotten the whistle before, because he came to an abrupt halt. Ann gave one of those "mother stares" which, roughly translated, means, "Get home this instant or your friends and I will be visiting your grave," and pointed in the direction of her house. Poor boy, I actually felt a little sorry for him. I knew he was done for.

I mean, after all, I am sure that when Ann left the house to walk to mine, she hadn't actually said to any of her sons, age notwithstanding, "Oh, and by the way, while I am out, I don't want a single one of you boys moving that car," but then again, she probably also hadn't said, "And no one is to paint his bedroom black while I am gone." Funny, the things we forget to tell our children. Here was a woman I could, in modern parlance, "relate to." I still remember the time I found out that one of my daughters had gone out roller-blading at midnight. When confronted with the fact that I knew about this, she said, "You told me I couldn't *ride my bike* over to Jamie's. You never said I couldn't roller-blade."

Naturally, when I discovered that Ann had a book for grown-ups called *What's a Mother to Do?* coming out, I was anxious both to read and talk about it. I promise you, if you are a mother, are married to a mother, had a mother, or have ever known a mother, this book will not disappoint. With the humor that comes so naturally to Ann, she addresses aspects of parenthood that provide a laugh a line. So what if Ann has five boys and I have only three daughters? Well, yes, there are also the three stepsons, but they came into my life rather late. I understood. In fact, as far as I can tell, the chief difference between raising boys and raising girls is the cost of the cosmetics.

Take, for examples, the night Ann reports sitting down to the dinner table with her husband and five sons and, after enduring all kinds of growling and grumpiness from the group, said, "Why am I the only one here who doesn't have PMS?" In her chapter entitled, "Gotcha: The Kids," Ann reminds us of what we all know: Children (1) consider it an obligation to throw temper tantrums in the check-out line at grocery stories, (2) deem it a holy privilege to become histrionic while their parents are on the phone—especially with professionals the parents would like to impress, and (3) imagine every injury life-threatening.

In fact, just the other day, I met Ann at the grocery store, and she told me that her youngest son had developed an earache the night before, so he was a little cranky. I guess she felt a obliged to explain why the little boy was unwilling to give up his pursuit of cookies and candy in deference to a conference between his mother and me with—heaven forbid—something that at this point didn't involve either of the two basic food groups—sugar and salt. I said, "Let me guess. This earache happened before two and four in the morning; you had to go to the emergency room, and you needed to get up early today for something else." Now, any nonparent would think I was clairvoyant because, of course, that was exactly what had happened. But not Ann. She knows all too well that middle-of-the-night earaches are one of the laws of nature, like gravity and taxes.

In the same chapter, Ann reports again and again the number of times that, as a normal mother, she has tortured her children, the kind the police can't pick you up for. As Ann points out, just being in the presence of your parents after you are a certain age is a major source of humiliation. It was good to know that it wasn't just my daughters who walked through shopping malls with me, acting as if they had been spontaneously generated by nature like Venus until, of course, it was time to pay for something. In fact, as Ann shows us, probably the only way to survive your child's adolescence is to relish these small moments when you can get even with him or her for having, at the age of six months, spit up all over you just as you were leaving for work.

I will never forget the time my youngest daughter called me from school on a morning when I didn't have any classes. She wanted to let me know that she was sick and needed me to come get her. She was only in seventh grade, so I was going to have to go into the principal's office and sign her out. Just as I was leaving the house, Amanda called back to ask me what I was wearing. I told her that I had on the same outfit I did when I drove her to school and discreetly dropped her off at the funeral home a block away from the school because my car embarrassed her. Anyway, what she said was, "You mean you *still* have on your sweatsuit?" I answered that I did. She said, "Don't bother coming for me. I don't feel that sick after all." Enough said!

In her first chapter, "You say Tomato: The Real Difference between Men and Women," Ann lets us in on the real stuff about the husband-wife relationship. Forget your copy of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus.* Leave it at home; give it to a library, or use it for a doorstop. The real difference between men and women, as Ann points out, is that, while a woman will ask for directions to the soup aisle in an unfamiliar grocery store, a man will drive fully a state out of his way before thinking he'd better get help. And then he'll usually send his wife in to ask for directions.

I know. Once when my husband and I were driving through the west coast of England, headed for Dunster, my husband, completely frustrated by the round-abouts and my inability to read the signs, which are fully two feet before you need to make the turn, finally stopped so that I could run into a store and ask how to get to Dunster. Of course, he pulled around the corner so no one would associate him with me—us being so well-known all over England, you know. I walked up to the counter meekly and said to the clerk, "I don't mean to be rude or silly, but where am I?" You can guess his answer: "Why, *this* is Dunster. What are you looking for?" Seems the English don't expect to have to announce to anyone that they are actually in a place. There were no "Welcome to Dunster" signs. No "this is the place" signs.

I learned an important lesson that day: No matter where you are, if a man is driving and he is lost, two things will happen: (1) He won't stop for directions until he needs gas; and (2) The fact that he is lost is always the woman's fault because apparently we don't know how to read maps or have any sense of geography. Now, I ask you, when your husband is lost, how can he accuse *you* of having no sense of direction? But, as Ann would say, I digress.

Ann's third chapter, "Fashion Folly," we all can laugh at. When was the last time you were invited to a pool party with your children and, silly you, because it was, after all, a pool party, went in bathing suits? In this chapter, Ann teaches us how to decode the complex and mostly female thing of the party invitation. Actually a pool party could be anything from Ben Franklin's famous romp in the Paris fountain to a slip-and-slide event. In any case, you'd want to go dressed for something in between the two.

And then there's the part about "Hair Anxiety." Now I don't know about most men, but Ann knows about women. We spend the first half of our lives trying to remake our personalities by redoing our hair and the second half surrendering to the fact that you get a whole lot more bang for your buck by purchasing a new novel than paying for a hairdresser.

I kept on reading this book simply because Ann is so funny and honest. How many academics, besides me and my husband, do you know who would admit to watching soap operas? She's absolutely right about *The Days of Our Lives.* The great joy of a soap opera is that you can leave it for months, even years, at a time, and the only things that change are the hairdos and the husband. There's some comfort in escaping into a world where everyone either owns or knows someone who owns a private jet, no one really ever seems to work, and everyone has money.

But the best part of soap operas is the way they do children. First, the woman gets pregnant; then, without gaining a single pound on any part of her body except where her womb is located, she delivers a baby, leaves the hospital in her favorite dress from her college sophomore year, and takes the baby home. After that, for four or five years, the child is frequently mentioned but is always either napping, playing quietly in his room, or studying for law school. Then, five years later—virtual reality here, not real reality—he or she emerges as a full-grown player in the on-going complications of the plot. Odd, isn't it, that the child you gave birth to at the very same time as his or her fictional counterpart is just starting kindergarten, and his television counterpart is busy making his own babies and practicing corporate law?

Back to Ann's honesty. I don't trust people—and neither does Ann—who tell me they don't ever watch television, or worse, that they only watch PBS or the Arts and Entertainment Channel. As Ann points out, we all have to live in the real world so much that escape is not just necessary, it is healthy. Especially if your children don't age as they do on television. I suspect that none of Ann's children either slept or played quietly in the other room for years at a time, and I know for a fact that even her oldest son, in spite of having a lawyer for a father, is not in law school. I suspect that he wants to graduate from high school first.

You see, the best thing about Ann Cannon, besides the fact that she can write with humorous brilliance that shines a bright light into the darkness of whatever your current worry is, is that Ann doesn't pretend. Take, for example, her chapter on "Some Shallow Thoughts on Man's Best Friend." I am with you, Ann. Let's get a grip. The only reason that we think dogs are so intelligent is that they either complacently go along with whatever destiny has laid out for them or, at the moment, respond with a bark, which is probably what we would like to do. Of course, being human and adult, we women aren't allowed to complain, let alone bark. As Ann puts it, in another chapter, "A man dying of starvation, for instance, will always say, 'I'm dying of starvation,' whereas a woman likewise dying of starvation will murmur politely, 'Is anybody here hungry? Can I get anybody something to eat?'" Naturally, to a woman, a dog seems incredibly intelligent. He doesn't ask for anything but to be waited upon and, in return, offers endless companionship. Now that's intelligence. But Ann sees right through this, as she does through cats, which she describes as "female adolescents sulking around the house."

Now, having spent ten years in the trenches with three female adolescents and two cats, I can affirm that Ann is not far off the mark here, except that cats don't ever need a ride at the last minute to "simply the most important school activity of the year, Mom." So, you get the picture on Ann's attitude toward animals. It's not that she hates them, not even that she is indifferent to them. It's just that she doesn't want to mistake them, any more than the characters from *The Days of Our Lives,* with real people. On the one hand, you have a dog or a cat, which is just that: a dog or a cat. On the other hand, you have people who survive fatal attacks, amnesia, and plastic surgery and leave the show for a couple of years. When they return to the soap opera (under the guise of a different actor), everyone on stage seems willing to believe in the survival of the attack, the amnesia, and the effects of plastic surgery. The one thing I don't get, however, is that no one seems to notice that the plastic surgery actually made this character six inches taller. But then, let's be honest. Willing suspension of disbelief is the only thing that gets any of us English teachers by.

I could go on and on about this book. Her chapter entitled "And So On and So Forth" includes an essay called "Wimps Need Not Apply." No kidding, Ann. This particular essay is about vacationing with your spouse's family, but it also goes without saying that it applies to life—especially when that life involves parenting. So back to soap operas, parenting, literature, and willing suspension of disbelief.

In an interview I did recently with Ann she made it absolutely clear why all this happens. If we can't willingly suspend our disbelief about literature, how are we ever going to be able to have a conversation with a teenager? If we can't see the giant discrepancies between what we think our life ought to be like and what it really is like as a source of humor, we're headed for depression, Prozac, and the psychiatrist's couch. Ann teaches us to laugh. Trust me. She's a whole lot better than Prozac and a whole lot cheaper than a therapist. And she's a whole lot more real than Martha Stewart.

PATRICIA TRUXLER COLEMAN is Chair of the English Department and Professor of English, Westminster College, Salt Lake City. This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, 28 February 1998, Westminster College, by Levi S. Peterson, with this author's note: "I am deeply indebted to Levi Peterson who, along with Ann Cannon, I consider two of the funniest and most on-target writers in Utah today. Levi agreed to deliver this address for me; and I would like to say that I am sorry to be missing this meeting, but frankly, I am not. My husband and I are on sabbatical in England, no doubt lost in some round-about, and he is waiting until we run out of gas to stop for directions, and, of course, I am to blame for the fact that we are actually in Northern Wales rather than Yorkshire."

WORK CITED

Cannon, Ann Edwards. *What's a Mother to Do?* Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997.

More Manic Mantic Mormon Antics: Recent Trends in Mormon Literary Humor

Sherlene Hall Bartholomew

My thesis, "An Annotated Bibliography of Literary Mormon Humor," annotates and cross-references 546 sources of Mormon humor and its criticism in seven categories: "Humor in Mormon Fiction," "Humor in Mormon Nonfiction," "Mormon Criticism Assessing 'Inside Humor,'" "Non-Mormon ('Gentile') Criticism of the Saints' Humor," "'Gentile' Humor about Mormons," "Mormon Criticism of 'Gentile' Humor," and "Mormon Internet Humor."

Attached to the bibliography is an index to many of the original humorous pieces, samples of which are available for scholarly research in Special Collections and Manuscripts, Le Library (HBBL), Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602. This index lists over a thousand topics, including a multitude of human foibles our humorists have lampooned, binding up wounds with application of laughter as a soothing balm. Although this bibliography and index will be of interest principally to literary scholars and cultural historians, others may find it useful in adding fun and interest to a talk, classes, or papers that address some aspect of the human condition.

Professor Richard H. Cracroft, chair of my thesis committee, provided an overview of the history and development of Mormon humor in his 1985 unpublished article, "A Time to Laugh," as brought up to date by his "A Bibliography of Mormon Humor: or, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Eternal Life," presented as part of an AML panel on humor in February 1997. We distributed preliminary versions of this bibliography/thesis then and also passed out copies at the Association for Mormon Letters conjoint sessions, October 1997, Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association (RMMLA), in Denver.

I confirm the originality of my thesis work and support the credibility of my byline as author by stating that, as regards the humor sources in this bibliographic collection, I personally identified, located, read or reviewed, compiled, annotated, cross-referenced with other applicable commentary and criticism, indexed, formatted, and entered them on the computer. I did all the research and writing, with valued direction from Cracroft, my mentor, whose skillful editing of what I produced improved and shaped the whole. Besides giving me access to his office library, in about a dozen cases, Cracroft placed books containing modern Mormon humor, which he had been sent to review, beside my computer or suggested a title I had not considered. I much appreciate this helpfulness in providing source information and guidance. He also conceived the idea, which I carried out, of photocopying about seven hundred "representative samples" drawn from the 546 humor and criticism sources listed in this bibliography; I filed these samples in the previously mentioned

Humor Archive, housed in HBLL Special Collections. Despite references to a humor bibliography begun earlier,[1] no such listing was made available to me during the course of this project.[2] I acknowledge with gratitude Professor Cracroft's role in instigating, directing, and encouraging my work on this bibliographic collection. Certainly the idea and vision for this enterprise belong to him, and I benefitted much from his perspective and advice along the way.

This study was indeed a labor of laughs. What fun I had this year, snooping and shuffling through Professor Cracroft's humor-laden bookshelves as I transported armloads of treasure from his collection to the adjacent Center for Christian Values, in preparation for yet another laugh-filled evening. I found Mormon humor ranging from a more gentle, nostalgic, quietly ironic vein, such as Virginia Sorensen's *Where Nothing Is Long Ago*, and Edward Geary's *Goodbye to Poplarhaven*, to the more obvious contact-lens-popping humor found in stories like Neal Chandler's "Benediction" and Levi Peterson's "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights." It was more fun getting up mornings, knowing that evening was on its merry way, when I could hole myself up to read supernally devilish satire—all alone, without one single interruption, except from an occasional concerned janitor, who, noting a pause in the (muted, certainly not "loud") laughter reverberating up, down, and around empty halls—checked in just to make sure I was still breathing.

After all that fun reading distinctly "Mormon" humor, it was a little disconcerting when Eugene England, on hearing about our project, joked: "Mormon humor? Isn't that an oxymoron?," a sentiment echoed by a woman I met at the meetings of the RMMLA. Having been introduced to some good LDS humor in England's "Literature of the Latter-day Saints" class, I knew, although he was jesting, that he also reflected the general perception that we Mormons seem lacking in humor. This bibliography indicates that although "official" and public Mormon humor is generally sparse, there are rich veins of literary Mormon humor to be mined by adventurers willing to pick a little.

Granted, some Mormon humor is decidedly trite, some spiteful, some clearly swiped from jokes in other cultures. Too much of it projects unsagacious silliness, supine salaciousness, insipid sappiness, or schmaltzy schlock. Unfortunately, Mark Twain's observation that "Everything has its limit—iron ore cannot be educated into gold" ("What Is Man?" 4) seems especially true when it comes to the making of humor. Unless the Spirit sponsors miraculous dispensations, in most cases, a person either has "the gift" or does not. A collection like this at least keeps handy the best humor that has emerged; we can learn from its wisdom, if not its style. Fortunately, God gave many Saints the gift, as evidence of his love, to make the load less burdensome for all.

I feel that good humor is a pure and clear but sometimes pungent and purging draught, often a divine surprise, to renew lightheartedness among the Saints and thus to increase their faith, hope, and charity. I also feel that Mormons, as a people, have drawn much more than previously thought at this wholesome fount. My goal in this bibliography is to document a blessed mirth that many have overlooked, a prevailing propensity in LDS culture to laugh instead of weep, and a refreshingly healthy maturing as Mormons are better able to laugh at themselves.

Latter-day Saints, by their very belief that fallen humankind should aspire to godhood, must accept the immense disparity between where they are and where they are going. This gap guarantees the likelihood of a whopping, potentially comic, ironic incongruity that is, Cracroft observes, the very essence of the comic spirit. He therefore concludes:

> The Mormon funnybone is sensitive, healthy,

> and active, based as it is in positive, life-affirming values and a positive world-view, while faced with persistent disparity—all of which makes mortality a very good "time to laugh"; indeed, there may never be a better time if Mark Twain is right in asserting that "There is no humor in heaven"! ("A Time to Laugh," 2)

Twain's logic, in assuming that "there is no humor in heaven," was his belief that "Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of Humor itself is not joy but sorrow" (*Following the Equator*, 101, headnote). Twain might, with such wisdom, have fortified the argument that God has a *divine* sense of humor, had he read Enoch's question "How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?" (Moses 7:29).

In a 1982 BYU forum address, Cracroft declared:

> If humor is based largely in incongruities fostered by society, I shout "Hurrah for the Mormon heaven," where the "same sociality" exists on earth. I see some distinctive possibilities for humor in the Mormon heaven — possibilities for a lofty Celestial, middle-brow Terrestrial, and downright earthy Telestial variety. Think about the witty *bon mots* of haughty Celestial types as they jest about the rare, Godly English major (it took a long time) trying to engineer his first universe; or about the length of Fast Sundays when a day is as a thousand years; of the joys of eternal motherhood, and eternal (and numberless) mothers-in-law. I suppose that Outer Darkness will be eerily lightened now and then by a few anti-administration jokes, as well as a few nagging Cleopatra and Antony, or Mr. and Mrs. Macbeth, or What did Hitler say to Mussolini? jokes. In the heavens are there to be no incongruities?—the thought makes reason stare. Just knowing we're forever tells me there'll be humor there! And think of all the available wives waiting to refine one's delivery and straighten out his punch line! ("A Time for Laughter," 11)

Modern prophets do not question God's ability to laugh as well as weep and do not hesitate to do likewise, within certain limits (Packer, 279-80). President Gordon B. Hinckley commented to a reporter,

> We've got to have a little humor in our lives. You had better take seriously that which should be taken seriously but, at the same time, we can bring in a touch of humor now and again. If the time ever comes when we can't smile at ourselves, it will be a sad time. (Hinckley, 432)

And Elder Robert D. Hales tells how President Spencer W. Kimball once observed to him, "Do you know the devil can never laugh, can never smile, can never enjoy himself?" (Hales, 144). If Satan represents opposition to things virtuous, then good humor and free laughter are squarely on the side of the angels.

Maturing humor seasons in an individual and collective climate that is warmed by the lightness of spirit experienced when a person or a people is unburdened with blaming, defensiveness, selfishness, and moroseness. After researching early documents in the LDS Historical Department Archives, Leonard J. Arrington made available to researchers his notes about Joseph Smith's joviality as described by Brigham Young and others, and explores background influences, as well as implications for Latter-day Saints. Explaining that the Lord schooled the Prophet Joseph early, before he could be influenced by the "sanctimonious demeanor" of his would-be-holy contemporaries, Arrington observes:

> He thus avoided the artificially severe, ascetic, fun-abhorring mantle that contemporary religion seemed to insist upon. He was pious, but not inhibited; earnest, but not fanatical; a warm, affectionate, and enjoyable personality—a prophet who was both serious and playful—a wonderful exemplar of the precept: "Man is that he might have joy" [2 Ne. 2:25]. It was humor which helped Joseph to dispose of conflicts and problems that did not really matter. . . . Our difficult moral struggles require a certain relax-

> ation and surrender. We should give the Lord and the Holy Ghost a chance to do the refreshing. (3, 10-11)

Jedediah M. Grant observed:

> How is it that brother Brigham is able to comfort and soothe those who are depressed in spirit and always make those with whom he associates so happy? I will tell you how. He is happy himself and [that] man can make others feel so, for the light of God is in him. (*JD* 3:12)

Brigham Young himself commented:

> I like to be pleased myself. I like to be filled with joy; but if I cannot be filled with joy and gladness that is full of meat and marrow, or, in other words, full of meaning and sense, I would rather retain my gravity. (*JD* 9:290)

In a similar vein, Mark Twain averred: "Laughter without a tinge of philosophy is but a sneeze of humor. Genuine humor is replete with wisdom" (Ayres, 108).

It is perhaps in this spirit that Cracroft, in editing my annotations, often wrote a qualifying, "But is this funny?" beside a so-called "humorous" entry—after having encouraged me to collect comprehensively and without value judgments, so that the collection would be complete, for scholarly evaluation. The complexity of deciding what qualifies as "funny" rapidly became apparent, especially considering such facets as wit, satire, parody, irony, comedy, and punning. So much of a person's reaction to humor depends on his or her background, personality, and changing cast of mind which varies from day to day and even from hour to hour.

Additionally perplexing is spontaneous humor that erupts unanticipated and therefore unedited, in ways that can be delightful, but also sometimes hurtful and even dangerous (Cracroft, "Bibliography," 19-20). This collection emphasizes humor that has been committed to the page as literary, or compiled and edited—usually published—humor. No attempt is here made to list transcriptions of oral lore, including jokes, or taped or video recordings of orally circulated, traditional humor.

In his essay, "E. B. White and the Theory of Humor," Stephen L. Tanner indicates that:

> White pointedly discounted the value of analyzing humor for the sake of theory. "Humor can be dissected, as a frog can," he said, "but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind." Humor, he insisted, "won't stand much blowing up, and it won't stand much poking. It has a certain fragility, an evasiveness, which one had best respect. Essentially it is a complete mystery." . . . Elsewhere, he added, "To interpret humor is as futile as explaining a spider's web in terms of geometry." (Qtd. in Tanner, 43)

While acknowledging the elusive nature of intentional humor, Cracroft outlines some identifying characteristics that qualify "our senses of humor" as "our lines of defense":

> Humor is especially dangerous to the somber-spirited one. Too often those who seem to be taking their subjects seriously are simply taking themselves seriously. A sense of humor is the ability to discover, to identify, and to appreciate the ludicrous and the incongruous—in words, situations, in ideas, in human beings, in the universe. A sense of humor is at least a partial way of looking at life. It is a person opting to see himself or herself from a comic instead of from a solemn perspective. Humor is a kind of self-dramatization in which a human being clambers out of himself, springs to a nearby pinnacle, and views himself from a different standpoint, from a comic stance, which either diminishes the problem by lacing it in a cosmic context or magnifies the problem by exaggerating the matter to ludicrous dimensions and thus diminishing it.

Cracroft adds:

> While humor presents the ludicrous as it is, wit exposes the ludicrous by contrasting it with something else. Wit is, wrote Mark Twain, "the sudden marriage of ideas which before that union were not perceived to have any relation." Humor, unlike wit, may be gentle or rough, subtle or unsophisticated, but it need not be critical. Humor can range from the bludgeonings

> of burlesque to a subtle turn of the pen, but true humor is always a product of natural growth, a product of accident—not art. Humor is spontaneous. It is a child psychiatrist writing in a newspaper about disciplining children, "It is permissible to spank a child, if one has a very definite end in view."

Further,

> The complexities of humor depend so much upon launching the right incongruities at the right moment. The "sense of humor" must, therefore, include a keen sense of timing, which is almost a moral sense. Humor is a threat to our pride, for it is an occasional reminder that the sure and firm-set earth upon which we tread can shake and tumble us at any moment. If you say that such is also the effect of religion, you are speaking gospel truth. True humor and true religion mount a steady siege against the layers of falseness which can congest and destroy our souls.

He concludes:

> We have enough jokes, I think; what we need are more laughs and more of the optimism and faith in the universe which enables laughter. What we need is a greater sense of the ridiculous, the ludicrous, the incongruous. Laughing at the laughable, which often includes laughing at ourselves, will enable us to put mundane realities and Eternal Truths into their proper perspectives, unfettered by our Self, which can distort the simplest of truths. Our senses of humor are our lines of defense against the vicissitudes of life. ("Our Senses," 47)

Although Cracroft invariably left to me the final decision about which items to include in this bibliography, he let me know what he thought was "appropriate" Mormon humor, sometimes questioning whether dark or stinging satire could be classified as "humorous" at all. I soon learned that "Is this funny?" in the margin really meant: "Does this humor amuse or abuse? Is this healing? Does this humorist lampoon to jostle readers into awareness, or with intent to hurt and destroy? Is the aftertaste refreshing or bitter, the fare nourishing or poisonous? Is this humor rationalizing or actualizing?"

Cracroft asks good questions. He raised a number of them in his controversial and classic AML presidential address in 1992, "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature." That essay has become a standard for me, yet I struggle, as does he, about where to draw the line between what is essentially "mantic" or "sophic." It seems doubtful that the earthy realism in humorous stories like Levi Peterson's "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights" and Neal Chandler's "Benediction" will be featured in the *Ensign*. Yet I often find the relative "healing" potential in laughter provoked by these authors more nourishing of the mantic in me than literary fare from authors whose approaches, at times, have been described as formulaic "myth" (Jorgensen, 128-29).

On the other hand, while I laughed out loud reading Brian Evenson's "Sanctified, In the Flesh," a morbid satire that portrays a zealously "religious" wife who nags her less-convinced husband with superstitious, self-righteous dogmatism, I found other elements in the story—flippant treatment of the sacred, capriciously injected violence, and a nihilistic tone—decidedly unfunny. As Lavina Fielding Anderson explained in her AML presidential address, "Making 'The Good' Good for Something: A Direction for Mormon Literature," "The new Mormon fiction attempts something more ambitious. It is literature of intelligent affirmation, not of alienation, fiction that takes as its province the hitherto unexplored field of spiritual experience and treats it as realism" (106). Enlarging on this theme, she asserts,

> In spiritual realism, the conflicts that a character may encounter in his or her social settings are primarily important as they provide information about the spiritual life of that person. The experiences move the person toward a greater understanding of the ambiguous nature of

> human good and human depravity. They affirm or challenge the reality of God. They illuminate by recording those perplexing moments when prayers are not answered and the equally perplexing moments when they are. They shoulder the burden of the community where a vision of holiness and unity stands in contrast to the inevitable pettiness and cruelties of daily living. They attempt to make sense out of human interaction that includes both deepest doubts and anger focused on a seemingly uncaring God and swelling rejoicing and gratitude focused on a seemingly loving and watchful God. (107-08)

To shield ourselves from literary humor that is questioning, perturbing, biting, challenging, or complex would be as impossible and impractical as to try and shield ourselves from life. On the other hand, to expose ourselves deliberately to "humor" so morose and sardonic that it provokes more grimace than grin is to shackle that lightness of spirit which differentiates between the comedic and its opposite. Moreover, "real" life, as experienced by Latter-day Saints in general, is best faced with faith and hope.

In reviewing Levi S. Peterson's *The Canyons of Grace*, a collection of stories that includes "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights," one of the most hilarious "Mormon" pieces created, Eugene England writes:

> In the main [Peterson's] protagonists are attractive human beings *in spite of* their being Mormon, not *because* of it. We still must wait for a writer to capture consistently the deep ravishment of sincere Mormon faith, the comprehensible joy as well as the utterable anxiety God's presence can bring. [This book] breaks valuable ground and may be the best collection of Mormon stories yet, but we can anticipate better, from him and others. (121)

The pure delight and important insights savored of "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights" are sullied by the story's conclusion in which Rendella Kranpitz, the recipient of many "service project" plates of cookies, returns the favor in feces to the bishop's front step. This coarse joke is similar to elements in several of Peterson's other stories, supporting my conclusion that in some cases, the best humor spills forth in spite of and not because an author's of negative distractions and preoccupations.

In establishing workable categories for evaluating Mormon humor, I find useful Monet's technique as described on a box calendar by my desk that features a print of his art every day of the year. On Tuesday, 19 August 1997, the calendar celebrates Monet's radiant work, "Small Haystacks—Les Moulettes," under which is this note: "To capture light, Monet began to paint in pure color only, without black pigment even for shadows" (*Year*). Some would argue, with Lehi, that "it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Ne. 2:11); however, we must remember that Lehi was portraying the full range of mortal reality. Nephi, however, emphasized the positives of is father's theme, insisting, "I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness" (2 Ne. 26:23). Though "dark" humor can define light by contrast, it sheds little, if any, of itself and, in my view, works little of humor's potential on the groping human soul.

Bruce W. Jorgensen, who was AML president the year immediately preceding Cracroft, made a case in his presidential address that the central question of all story—and thus possibly of every form of human culture—is simply: "How shall we greet the Other? Shall we devour, or annihilate, or welcome? . . . The rule at any rate seems clear: welcome the stranger, bathe and clothe and feed, maybe even hear the story, then ask who" (54-55).

Jorgensen continues:

> Hospitable reading would be slow to shut out. It would be slow to decide whether a literary visitor is "Mormon" or not, especially slow to gauge this by some presumed "doctrinal" crite-

> rion or some elusive metaphysical or "essential" notion of "spirituality." (61)

In a similar vein, John Bennion makes a case for a "balanced narrative diet" that includes both popular and literary Mormon novels in terms also applicable to literary humor:

> Few examples are purely mantic and popular or purely sophic and literary. No individual work perfectly entertains the stranger; no novel secures the home culture unchanged. Popular fiction that allows no excursion into the unfamiliar world has no tension; literary fiction that allows no firm framework is valueless, having no moral center. (172)

Bennion also expresses his view that there is "room for both at the inn" (171), and sounds a call for

> a compromise between faithful and literary writers and critics, beginning by recognizing that each is different and each culturally precious. I am encouraging a grudging friendship, an occasional dance where readers of faithful and literary fiction each take turns leading (and not with a strong right). Through such efforts, we might overcome the divisiveness that dominates much discussion of Mormon literature. (178-79)

Certainly this plea for more openness and welcoming sounds inviting. In a Church where outreach is integral to our perspective and mission, we must continually stretch to include much diversity. Such stretching does not, however, erase moral boundaries; new converts must make covenants at baptism to maintain standards and values shared by the community of faithful Latter-day Saints. Were these boundaries compromised, Mormon whole culture would ferment lukewarmly, lose its distinctive flavor, and quickly become "spew"-worthy (Rev. 3:16). I believe that similar moral boundaries must also be drawn before a literary work is baptized "Mormon." Such boundary-drawing does not preclude the reader's appreciation of non-Mormon literature, any more than he might cease associating with and learning from non-Mormons of good character. However, before I accept a work as LDS, I feel that its content must witness the author's total immersion.

It is only fair to ask those Mormon writers of humor who do not choose fellowship with the Saints to also "hear" those who are struggling to be authentic Latter-day Saints. Such writers can cease excluding the more orthodox from the conversation by deliberately abusing their sensibilities, insisting on satiric themes that describe Mormons mired in violent, brutal, abusive, or immoral behavior. I find such writing in satiric works like Franklin Fisher's *Bones* (a novel about an excommunicated missionary enmired in often grotesque, stream-of-sexual-consciousness, who leaves his roots for life as a would-be artist in California), or in Dennis Clark's "Answer to Prayer" (a story exploring the similarly mired mind of a young husband). Levi Peterson included this story in his collection *Greening Wheat: Fifteen Mormon Short Stories.* Mormon novelist Marilyn Brown, reviewing this collection, described such stories as "not as 'Mormon' as they could be in such an unabashedly claimed 'Mormon' work." To such humorists, writers, and editors, I say, "Let us hear a more authentic voice. Give us Mormon writing that reflects Mormon life that has more depth than is evident from authors who exhibit no more than a cultural or cultured veneer." Such writers will speak the language of authentic Latter-day Saints, not just in words, but in Spirit, and will tutor Mormon sensibilities with clearly focused humor.

My plea is not a call for didactic, uncomplicated reading. I find that Leonard J. Arrington's guidelines for writing Mormon history also apply to the writing of Mormon humor:

> Life is inevitably complex. People are not always predictable, and organizations, even the Lord's church, are not always benign. The reporting of our history, if readers are to have confidence in it, must reflect these ambiguities and complexities. Just as important, we must demonstrate our

> true love for those who have questions, who are perplexed by certain aspects of our history, who are disturbed about a few personalities and policies. While being true to our own sense of integrity, we must help others be true to theirs, without becoming bitter against those with punctured illusions who seem to enjoy the bad truths more than the good truths. We must practice warmth in our personal relationships with people of varying degrees of faith, belief, and practice. I believe, with Brigham Young, in doing the best we can and leaving the balance to God. We must not become cynical; we must not become morbidly preoccupied with some of the unsavory elements in our peoples' history. If our history furnishes examples of man's inhumanity, it also furnishes examples of man's humanity. ("Personal Reflections," 45)

Neal Chandler provides a positive example of skilled art unmarred by sophic distraction in his story "Benediction," a spoof about a Gospel Doctrine class that should be read by each teacher in the Church. Reader Bruce L. Christensen notes:

> Sacred things laughed at become sacrilege. Chandler's story recognizes our human condition without depreciating our spiritual values. He helps us laugh at ourselves and our propensity to accept and even to promote the secular as equivalent to the sacred. Through Chandler's humorous lens we see the universal desire to make order out of chaos in the struggle to connect daily life to religious aspiration (in this case, a Sunday School teacher's absurd comparison between a movie hero and the Apostle Peter). (4)

Despite these strongly held feelings, in the spirit of encouraging a better conversation within all of Mormondom, I have made this bibliography as comprehensive as possible, including items like those already discussed that may not seem attuned to Mormon culture and that some, including myself, might find offensive for their less-centered depictions of Mormons and Mormon culture and belief. The annotations should enable those reading for edification to surmise each entry's basic content.

A closer look at this bibliography reveals my methodology. Some pieces are just plain fun in their light satirization of certain aspects of being a Mormon. Who can forget essays like Elouise Bell's "Zzzzzucchini" in *Only When I Laugh*, Louise Plummer's description of her written choir audition in *Thoughts of a Grasshopper*, or Emma Lou Thayne's "Dream" about that man who stole her cookies in *All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir* (with coauthor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich)—not to mention Laurie M. Johnson's seam-busting spoof, *Special Living Lessons for Relief Society Sisters, by Sister Fonda Alamode*, and Kathryn Kidd's novel *Paradise Vue*, an ironic, engaging tale about an unusual Relief Society presidency in an unmistakably usual LDS ward, along with her *The Alphabet Year*, about "perfect" and not-so-perfect Mormon mothers. Additional hilarity by male authors includes John Paxman's "Comedy of [BYU] Frosh Flukes," Clifton Jolley's "Selling the Chevrolet" (the car belonged to Gene England), J. Frederic Voros's "Goodworks, Inc.," in which he proposes a marketing scheme to sell services-by-proxy on behalf of the living (for pay, they'll home teach), and Richard H. Cracroft's rollicking, "On the Vicissitudes of Serving in the Bishopric," a spoof of Church leaders' sleeping in meetings. Also unforgettable is the fictional delight in Robert F. Smith's breakthrough novels, *Baptists at Our Barbecue* and *The Miracle of Forgetness.*

Often masterful is Robert Kirby's satire on Mormon humanity. As described in Section II of my thesis, Kirby's newspaper columns, as illustrated by Pat Bagley and available in such collections as *Sunday of the Living Dead, Wake Me for the Resurrection*, and *Pat & Kirby Go to Hell*, have provoked recent warfare between news editors vying for his services. Illustrating our discussion about how humorists have a child-like fresh perspective in looking at the world, note this e-mail sent to the compiler by Kirby, in answer to her request for some information. He signs his initial "K" at the bottom, and before we know it, he's having fun turning up carpet. Of course he's being goofy —but who else would have thought of such a twist, signing off:

> K
> Help, I've fallen and I can't . . . Hey, nice carpet!
> Robert Kirby
> rkirby@itsnet.com

Also poking with craft at Mormon cultural flaws with sometimes biting, acerbic cartoonery are Pat Bagley (*Oh My Heck!*, *Treasures of Half-Truth*) and Calvin Grondahl (*Utah Sex and Travel Guide*, *Marketing Precedes the Miracle*, *Sundays Foyer*, *Faith-Promoting Rumors*, and *Freeway to Perfection*). Samuel W. Taylor's *Heaven Knows Why* provided readers with the kind of characters Mormons have long made fun of (Hunsaker, 849-58), making waves ahead for modern satirists like Orson Scott Card, who teamed up with Grondahl's illustrations in *Saint-speak: The Mormon Dictionary*.

Mormon parodists have eased with humor the frustrations of growing up Mormon, teen romantic pitfalls, efforts to keep a high moral standard, the dating predicament for LDS singles, the disparity between youthful idealism and mature disillusionment, tensions rising from the gap between Christian "outer" and "inner" society; the twists and strains inherent in Mormon Wasatch Front culture, and generally coping with LDS personal and cultural idiosyncrasies.

Mormon humorists also mine family treasures: polygamy traditions, disparities in husband-wife roles, rearing children (especially teens), childlessness, family reunions and holidays, family letters, the isolation of the elderly, divorce, being single parents, and working with other members in Church callings. They also treat challenges evoked by particular Church standards, including participation in humanitarian service, keeping the Word of Wisdom, paying tithes, attending meetings, holding funerals, singing hymns, doing home-teaching, keeping the Sabbath, having large families, participating in Church welfare, holding family home evening, maintaining patience with reprobates, and relating with non-Mormons. Along with that, there is much to say, humorously, about Cheerios in church to insure quieter offspring, missions, and even how Mormons pray.

Humorists looking at women's issues have described the "Patty Perfect" syndrome, homemaking challenges, spousal relationships, and the challenge of staying on a diet. Men's issues, too, range widely and deal with sensitive issues like self-abuse and the dwindling of virility, to farces about facial hair, and (vigorous) participation in ward sports. (The thesis index includes many more topics and references to numerous examples.)

Physicist Niels Bohr maintains that "some things are so serious that you have to laugh at them" and that the "balance between seriousness and humour plays no small part as we become gradually accustomed to coping with practical necessities and learn to communicate in common language" (13-14). With similar perspective, Mormon satirists have a heyday depicting the Saints as struggling Christians. They attack unrelentingly some Latter-day Ain't (LDA) hypocrisies, revealing Mormon neglect of the weightier matters in a preoccupation with materialism, status, and appearance. Mormon humorists hold LDAs responsible for overemphasis on salvation by works (Paul J. Toscano, *Music and the Broken Word: Songs for Alternate Voices*); charitable institutional approaches to those good works (Bagley, *Treasures of Half-Truth*), Grondahl, *Utah Sex and Travel Guide*); narrow-minded prejudices (Brinkerhoff, *You*

> dards as polygamy, the Word of Wisdom, missionary work, the bishop, and crossing the plains—is self-promoting, self-congratulatory, and self-defensive. Calvin Grondahl's wonderful cartoons may gently (or not so gently) chide Mormons for their individual and collective flaws, but they also assert, for the most part, that Mormon culture is important, its flaws worth correcting, its idiosyncrasies worthy of our attention and our corrective laughter, for laughter does not dismiss, it focuses interest and attention, and often begets reform. ("A Time to Laugh," 4-5)

There are, of course, two sides of responsibility in nurturing Mormon humor. Readers must provide a more discerning, receptive, and responsive audience. When the reader is not threatened by satire and is freer to laugh at his or her flaws, thereby acknowledging incongruities, inconsistencies, and ambiguities in personal behavior, he or she is less concerned with others' weakness. As readers become proficient at identifying inconsistencies in their own behavior, discarding narrow-minded attitudes, and throwing out prejudices, they can rise above preoccupation with the self. They can accept with grace (and accept the "Grace" in) those circumstances in their lives that cannot change by creatively absorbing, instead of deflecting, offense when "outsiders" poke fun. Further, intelligent readers can learn to take heart when chastened by humorists and comics who prod them from perdition towards perfection. They accept Mark Twain's dictum: "The human race consists of the dangerously insane and such as are not" (*Mark Twain's Notebook*, 380). On another occasion, Twain observed, "Such is the human race. Often it does seem such a pity that Noah and his party did not miss the boat" (*Christian Science*, 146).

I acknowledge with thanks artist James Christensen's authorization to share some of his sketches, as published in the Spring, 1982 issue of *Dialogue*. I especially appreciate Christensen's portrait of the hunchback he describes as "Everyman" (Figure 1): "Each of us carries our own 'lump' through life," he says: "Some lumps are physical, some are emotional." Christensen graphically illustrates Mark Twain's "exaggerate and shrink" formula for humor and is lauded by Charlene Winters for being able, at the same time, to add layers of meaning to life's canvas through this device: "Christensen laughs at himself in a biographical piece depicting 'The Burden of the Responsible Man,' which exaggerates his circumstance, while shrinking his concerns through whimsical imagery" (36-41).

Under this drawing (Figure 2) of a woman who appears enlightened, relaxed—illumined by her light-yoked faith in Christ, Christensen writes about his approach to communication through his art in terms that might be applied to the writing of literary humor:

> I believe that art should communicate with everyone. The elitist attitude of art for the artists and the privileged few—obscurity for its own sake, the deliberate alienation of the public is a mistake—I do not want to lower my work to the lowest common denominator but rather offer a meaningful experience on a number of levels—so that there is a little treasure for the savant as well as the pedestrian viewer. My art must be provocative, convincing, and honest. (127)

I have left unanswered the question about where to draw the "mantic-sophic" line. There are no easy answers. In another of Christensen's drawings (Figure 3) is a man looking a little bewildered when the fish-kite he had hoped to sail aloft is grounded. The fish, traditionally a symbol for Christ and Christian values, may remind one of the difficulty raising a standard that embodies and represents such values—especially when we, like the man here portrayed, must shed some trappings to get a run with that kite against prevailing currents.

Although this cannot be easily expressed in

Know You're a Mormon If . . .); provincial attitudes (Grondahl and all the cartoonists), Sorensen, *Where Nothing is Long Ago*); isolationist world-views (Kirby, *Wake Me for the Resurrection*); and simplistic attitudes about politics (Bagley, *Treasures of Half-Truth*); bureaucracy (Card, "Notes from a Guardian Angel"); any kind of government, and even issues of war and peace (Cracroft, "Love at Home and Peace Abroad"). They warn the Saints against complacency regarding increasing local crime (Kirby, *Happy Valley Patrol* and his "Blitz" columns); their tendency to promote the secular as sacred (Chandler, "Benediction"; Peterson, "The Christianizing of Coburn Heights"); and their proclivity to religiously incorporate corrupt business practices (Chandler, "The Only Divinely Authorized Plan for Financial Success in This Life or the Next"). Always a popular target is the LDA propensity to equate material success with spiritual worthiness (Grondahl, *Marketing Precedes the Miracle*); to exercise unworthy use of authority in the name of patriarchy or matriarchy (Kump, "Sayso or Sense"); to become enchanted with pseudo-scholarship (Jeppson, "Non-editorial Postlude"); and to tolerate institutional obfuscations (Nibley, "Bird Island"). Mormon humorists also have not neglected the idiosyncracies in Mormon use of language (Newell, *Cow Chips Aren't for Dippin'*), names of Mormon children (Associated Press, "Utah Recognized for Peculiar Names"), and ward banquet menus (Salazar and Wightman, *No Man Knows My Pastries*).

As this quick overview shows, LDS humorists make us laugh in healthy ways that invite change. Much of this is handled with unsober propriety. Certainly those humorists who perturb Mormon personal and social consciences without fostering despair and disillusionment do the Saints a great service—God bless them, every one!

I find, with Thomas Kelly, that humor is infectious because it relaxes, refreshes, renews, and helps us forget. It is not only healing medicine, but preventive application as well, and it reduces tension within a family or group. Humor, says Kelly, is a natural gift of children that can lead to moments of high comedy (22-23). Children unite the spiritual and the comic by seeing the world from a fresh perspective that includes a number of important elements: they dismiss hurt, can be distracted from grief, forgive with spontaneity, explore constantly, question relentlessly, learn persistently, relate guilelessly, and love unconditionally. Beyond that, children have that quality intrinsic in the best humorists—they are brutally honest!

Psychologists insist that childhood is only easy when viewed in forgetful retrospect. A child's tears come as fast as his laughter, and much falling down precedes the constant getting-up. Likewise, a good humorist has to deal with the tough stuff, applying good humor, Cracroft has said, as a "cleansing purgative, and if the reader is in need of the medicine, he or she may, on occasion, be stung by the mixture ("Time to Laugh," 3).

Humor teaches, and learning is not always easy. Mark Twain was right in insisting that humor "must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever" (*Autobiography*, 198). Demonstrating that humor often flourishes when insecurities are replaced by confidence, this bibliography reinforces Cracroft's observation:

> Mormons have begun, increasingly, to milk their Sacred Cows—to kid themselves, their organization, their leaders, customs, folkways, traditions, and culture. But while some of the humor is based in self-criticism, particularly of Mormon tendencies toward distortion of its relative importance in the wider world; self-righteousness and smugness; and anti-intellectualism and an undue lack of self-reliance and consequent reliance upon authority, the bulk of

> Mormon humor—even about such old standards as polygamy, the Word of Wisdom, missionary work, the bishop, and crossing the plains—is self-promoting, self-congratulatory, and self-defensive. Calvin Grondahl's wonderful cartoons may gently (or not so gently) chide Mormons for their individual and collective flaws, but they also assert, for the most part, that Mormon culture is important, its flaws worth correcting, its idiosyncrasies worthy of our attention and our corrective laughter, for laughter does not dismiss, it focuses interest and attention, and often begets reform. ("A Time to Laugh," 4-5)

There are, of course, two sides of responsibility in nurturing Mormon humor. Readers must provide a more discerning, receptive, and responsive audience. When the reader is not threatened by satire and is freer to laugh at his or her flaws, thereby acknowledging incongruities, inconsistencies, and ambiguities in personal behavior, he or she is less concerned with others' weakness. As readers become proficient at identifying inconsistencies in their own behavior, discarding narrow-minded attitudes, and throwing out prejudices, they can rise above preoccupation with the self. They can accept with grace (and accept the "Grace" in) those circumstances in their lives that cannot change by creatively absorbing, instead of deflecting, offense when "outsiders" poke fun. Further, intelligent readers can learn to take heart when chastened by humorists and comics who prod them from perdition towards perfection. They accept Mark Twain's dictum: "The human race consists of the dangerously insane and such as are not" (*Mark Twain's Notebook,* 380). On another occasion, Twain observed, "Such is the human race. Often it does seem such a pity that Noah and his party did not miss the boat" (*Christian Science,* 146).

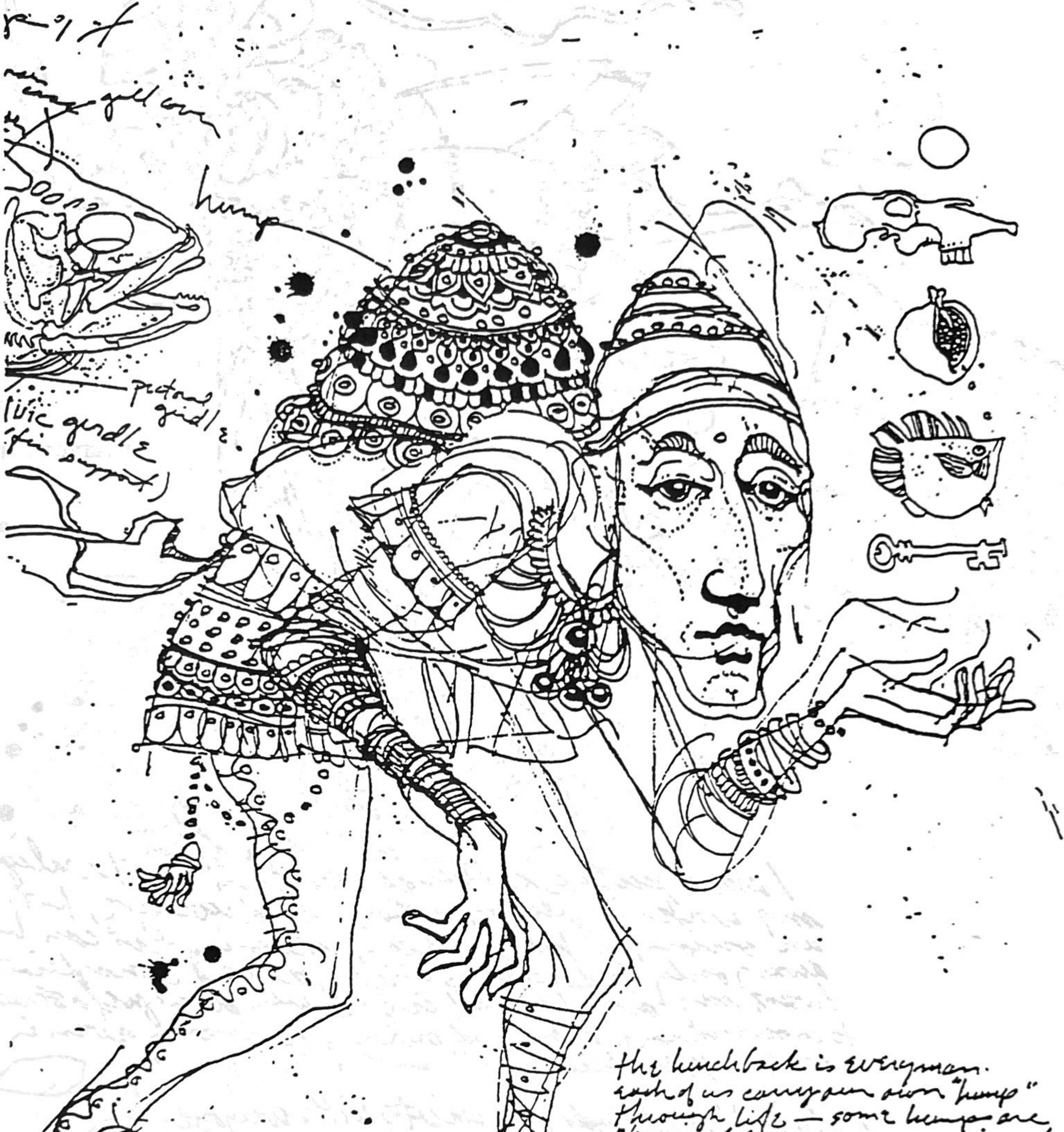
I acknowledge with thanks artist James Christensen's authorization to share some of his sketches, as published in the Spring, 1982 issue of *Dialogue.* I especially appreciate Christensen's portrait of the hunchback he describes as "Everyman" (Figure 1): "Each of us carries our own 'lump' through life," he says: "Some lumps are physical, some are emotional." Christensen graphically illustrates Mark Twain's "exaggerate and shrink" formula for humor and is lauded by Charlene Winters for being able, at the same time, to add layers of meaning to life's canvas through this device: "Christensen laughs at himself in a biographical piece depicting 'The Burden of the Responsible Man,' which exaggerates his circumstance, while shrinking his concerns through whimsical imagery" (36-41).

Under this drawing (Figure 2) of a woman who appears enlightened, relaxed—illumined by her light-yoked faith in Christ, Christensen writes about his approach to communication through his art in terms that might be applied to the writing of literary humor:

> I believe that art should communicate with everyone. The elitist attitude of art for the artists and the privileged few—obscurity for its own sake, the deliberate alienation of the public is a mistake—I do not want to lower my work to the lowest common denominator but rather offer a meaningful experience on a number of levels—so that there is a little treasure for the savant as well as the pedestrian viewer. My art must be provocative, convincing, and honest. (127)

I have left unanswered the question about where to draw the "mantic-sophic" line. There are no easy answers. In another of Christensen's drawings (Figure 3) is a man looking a little bewildered when the fish-kite he had hoped to sail aloft is grounded. The fish, traditionally a symbol for Christ and Christian values, may remind one of the difficulty raising a standard that embodies and represents such values—especially when we, like the man here portrayed, must shed some trappings to get a run with that kite against prevailing currents.

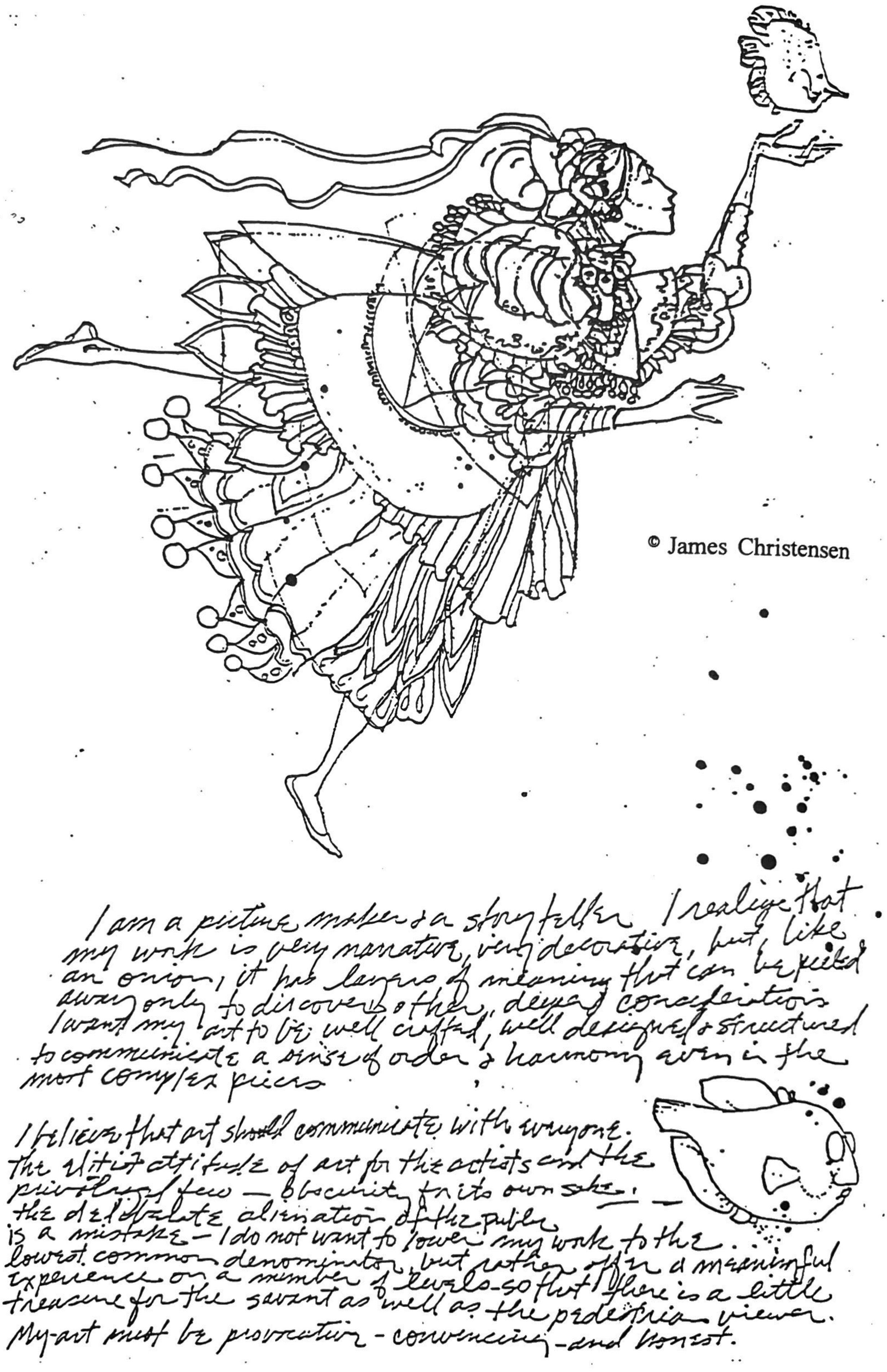
Although this cannot be easily expressed in


gill cover
hump
pectoral girdle
pelvic girdle (fin support)
the hunchback is Everyman. each of us carry our own "hump" through life — some humps are physical, some are emotional

© James Christensen

Fig. 1. "The Hunchback is Everyman." Sketch by James Christensen. "More Sketches from the Artist's Notebook." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XV:1 Spring 1982 (on cover).

DIALOGUE
A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

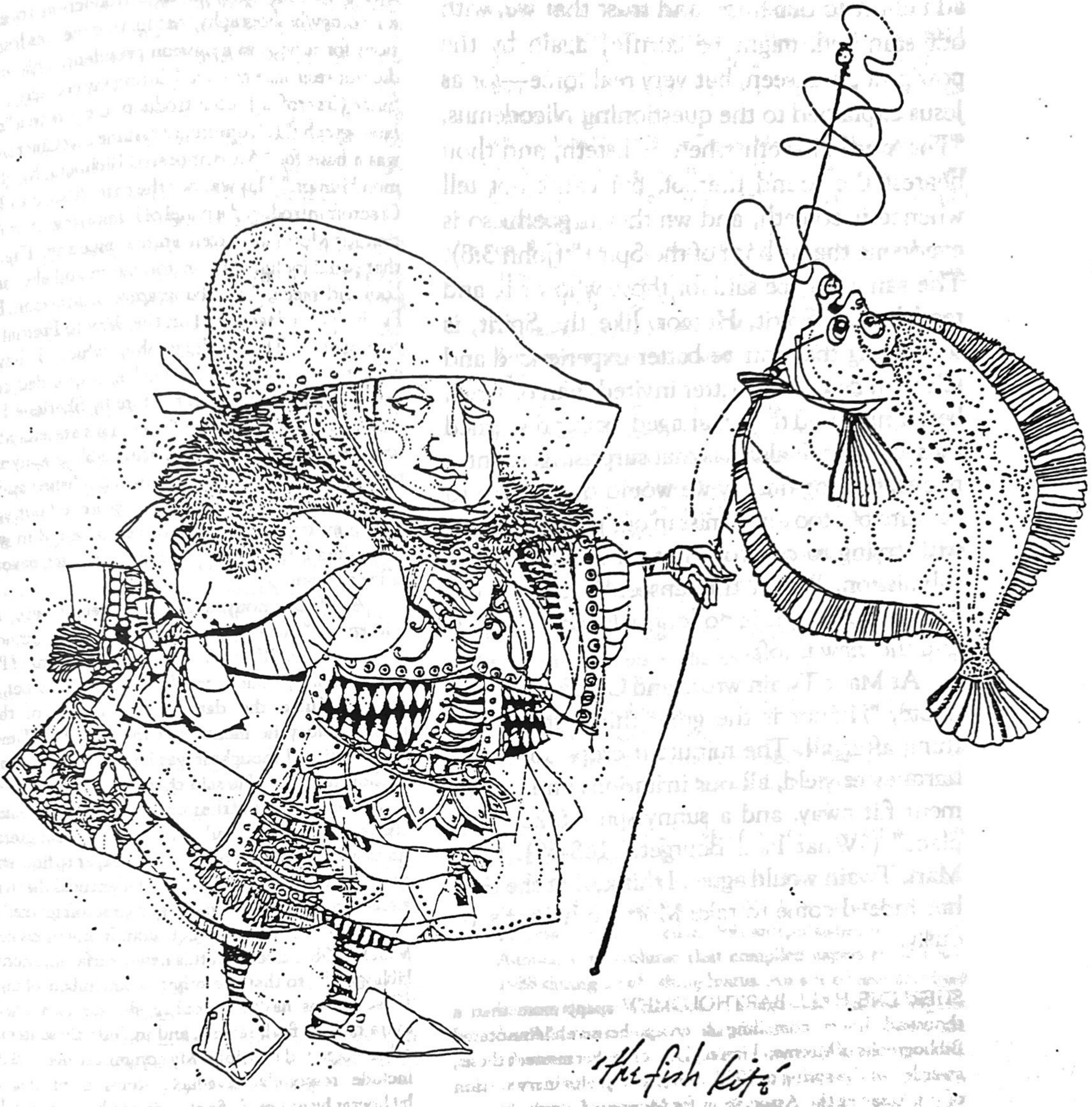


© James Christensen

I am a picture maker & a storyteller I realize that
my work is very narrative, very decorative, but like
an onion, it has layers of meaning that can be peeled
away only to discover other, deeper conceptions
I want my art to be well crafted, well designed & structured
to communicate a sense of order & harmony even in the
most complex pieces

I believe that art should communicate with everyone.
the elitist attitude of art for the artists and the
privileged few — obscurity for its own sake. —
the deliberate alienation of the public
is a mistake — I do not want to lower my work to the
lowest common denominator, but rather offer a meaningful
experience on a number of levels - so that there is a little
treasure for the savant as well as the pedestrian viewer.
My art must be provocative - convincing - and honest.

Fig. 2. Sketch by James Christensen. "More Sketches From the Artist's Notebook." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XV:1 Spring 1982, 127.



© James Christensen

Fig. 3. Sketch by James Christensen. "More Sketches From the Artist's Notebook." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XV:1 Spring 1982, 132.

language, Latter-day Saints can, with this man, add effort to our hope and trust that we, with our standard, might be born[e] again by the power of an unseen, but very real force—for as Jesus explained to the questioning Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The same may be said for those who write and read by the Spirit. Humor, like the Spirit, is something that can be better experienced and felt than described, better invited than ordered, better nurtured than managed, better discerned than defined. It also has that surprising, spontaneous, healing quality we would dearly love to capture but too often miss in our preoccupation with trying to control what asks only our free submission. When this unseen force lifts the human burden, it is no longer heavy but light, and the view is lofty.

As Mark Twain wrote and Cracroft loves to quote, "Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentment flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place" ("What Paul Bourget," 168-69). Even Mark Twain would agree, I think, that the time has indeed come to take Mormon humor seriously.

SHERLENE HALL BARTHOLOMEW spent more than a thousand hours compiling a comprehensive "Annotated Bibliography of Mormon Literary Humor" as her master's thesis, awarded in the spring of 1998. She read a preliminary version of this essay at the Association for Mormon Letters conjoint session, Rocky Mountains Modern Language Association, 17 October 1997, Denver. She appreciatively acknowledges Richard H. Cracroft's role as "instigator, source, advisor, exemplar, encourager, editor, and master-mentor" and also thanks BYU's Charles H. Redd Center for Western Studies for a grant that partially funded this study. Publication of the bibliography by *BYU Studies* is pending.

NOTES

1. Richard H. Cracroft's 1985 "A Time to Laugh," was attached, unrevised, as an introduction to early versions of this thesis, as distributed at AML and RMMLA meetings. Cracroft first wrote this essay as an introduction to an early humor anthology/bibliography that he told me was lost amid preparations for service as a mission president. This lost bibliography did not resurface as an aid during my compilation of my thesis. Since Cracroft's 1985 introduction refers to a "comprehensive bibliography" (8), one might assume that Cracroft's compilation was a basis for "An Annotated Bibliography of Literary Mormon Humor." This was not the case. Also, on 1 February 1997, Cracroft introduced a panel of humorist writers at the Association for Mormon Letters annual meeting. The publication of that panel included his introduction and also, as a concluding bookend piece, "A Bibliography of Mormon Humor: or, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Eternal Life." In it he comments: "This bibliography, which I have desultorily collected over two decades, has been expanded, coddled, urged, and scolded into its present state by Sherlene Hall Bartholomew . . . " ("Bibliography," 19). This statement may mislead some readers. The only preexisting bibliography made available to me was a list of Cracroft's own published and unpublished writing, a small part of all that I searched out and annotated during an eighteen-month research period in which I spent more than a thousand hours and went far beyond Cracroft's office shelves.

A 1985 anonymous twenty-eight-page incompletely referenced "Bibliography of LDS Humor" (annotated in my thesis's Section III) surfaced in the collections of BYU's Harold B. Lee Library Americana Room only days before my thesis defense. Since the date matched that of the bibliography/anthology he mentioned in his 1985 "Time to Laugh" introduction, I thought it was his lost collection and hastened to show it to him. He said that he had never before seen this bibliography. Many of the items were scattered humor columns, blurbs, and cartoons published in periodical literature, sometimes in unexpected sources. I was eager to find, annotate, and catalog new items from this list. I identified the items I had not already included in my thesis, and Cracroft marked those he felt were most important for inclusion. In my thesis defense on 12 March 1998, I discussed this newly surfaced, anonymous 1985 bibliography so that the other two members of my committee (Cracroft was the chair) would understand why I needed several extra days to find, review, and include these items and make other suggested revisions. My committee decided that I should include reasonably available items from this anonymous bibliography as I made final revisions but that my thesis should stand alone. They instructed me to drop Cracroft's 1985 "A Time to Laugh" and also his AML "A Funny Thing" talk as prefaces to my thesis, a decision with which Cracroft concurred. I again express appreciation to Cracroft, to whom Mormon humor has long been a cherished avocation, for encouraging me to carry out this project.

On 27 January 1998, after logging a thousand hours on this project, I gave James Allen a copy of my thesis at Cracroft's request, since Allen was then compiling a historical bibliography; in return Allen gave me twenty-six items that he found in a computer search of "humor." I did not have fourteen of these items, that I later annotated and included. I appreciate his cooperation.

2. Of 1,385 hours logged for this bibliographic project between 16 September 1996 and 3 April 1998, the first 400 were funded by a grant from BYU's Charles H. Redd Center for Western Studies designed to sponsor a professor/student joint venture. When the funding ended, Cracroft gave me the project as my thesis, so that it would be completed. I had already done much research, including a month in England, on another thesis, but, after some deliberation, set that project aside and continued work on this bibliography.

While looking for humor, I came across commentary and criticism about Mormon writing in general, which I included in a subsection to the humor bibliography, arguing that inspired humor is sponsored as side-product "seasoning" in good writing. However, as the bibliography continued to grow and become more unwieldy, Cracroft advised me to eliminate that section from the collection, and I agreed that it should be removed. As I came across items on Mormon writing in general, I continued to collect them but did not take time to annotate or index them. I made photocopies of selected items and added them to the Humor Archive, however, in the interest of future scholarship. I estimate that "Mormon Writing and Criticism," the excised portion of the endeavor, accounted for about 300 hours of those I logged as part of my total research. I hope to augment, annotate, and index this collection, as with the humor bibliography, and present it as a complementary study, in hopes that both collections will help lay firmer foundations for future developments in Mormon letters.

WORKS CITED

Anderson, Lavina Fielding. "Making 'The Good' Good for Something: A Direction for Mormon Literature." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18.2 (1985): 104-15.

Arrington, Leonard J. "The Looseness of Zion: The Lighter Side of Mormon History." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 40.2 (1990): 73-78.

---. "Personal Reflections." *Sunstone* 8.4 (July-August 1983): 41-45.

Ayres, Alex, ed. *The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Twain.* Binghamton, NY: Meridian, 1989.

Bennion, John. "Popular and Literary Mormon Novels: Can Weyland and Whipple Dance Together in the House of Fiction?" *BYU Studies* 37.1 (1997-98): 159-82.

Bohr, Niels. *Essays 1958-1962 on Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge.* Bungay, Suffolk, Eng.: Richard Clay, 1963.

Brown, Marilyn. Rev. of *Greening Wheat: Fifteen Mormon Short Stories. Daily Herald* (Provo, UT). 29 Jan. 1984.

Christensen, Bruce L. Letter. "Makes Me Chuckle." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14.4 (1985): 4.

Christensen, James C. "More Sketches from the Artist's Notebook." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15.1 (1982): 127, 132, and cover.

Clark, Dennis. "Answer to Prayer." *Greening Wheat: Fifteen Mormon Short Stories.* Ed. Levi S. Peterson. Midvale, UT: Orion, 1983. 151-76.

Clemens, Samuel Langhorne. *The Autobiography of Mark Twain.* Ed. Charles Neider. New York; Harper, 1959.

---. *Christian Science.* Authorized ed. New York: Collier, 1907.

---. *Following the Equator.* Vol. 1. New York: Collier, 1897.

---. *Mark Twain's Notebook.* Ed. Albert B. Paine. New York: Harper, 1935.

---. *"What Is Man?" and Other Essays.* New York: Harper, 1917.

---. "What Paul Bourget Thinks of Us." *Mark Twain Literary Essays.* Authorized ed. New York: Collier, 1918. Originally published in 1895.

Cracroft, Richard H. "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature." *AML Annual, 1994,* 2:35-43.

---. "A Bibliography of Mormon Humor: or, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Eternal Life." *AML Annual, 1998.* 7-8.

---. Introduction. *A Time to Laugh.* Unpub. (1985). Photocopy in my possession. See also version that I retyped originally for inclusion in my thesis, eliminated by my committee, but included in revised form in the Humor Archive.

---. "Our Senses of Humor Are Our Lines of Defense." *BYU Today,* March 1983, 47.

---. ". . . A Time for Laughter": Celebrating the Comic Spirit." Unpub. BYU Forum Address (1982).

England, Eugene. Rev. of *The Canyons of Grace,* by Levi S. Peterson." *BYU Studies* 23.1 (1983): 121-26.

Hales, Robert D. "Gifts of the Spirit." Provo, UT: Brigham Young UP, 1992-93.

Hinckley, Gordon B. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997.

Hunsaker, Kenneth B. "Mormon Novels." *A Literary History of the American West.* Ed. Thomas Lyon. Fort Worth, TX: Christian UP, 1987.

JD. *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855-86.

Jorgensen, Bruce W. "To Tell and Hear Stories: Let the Stranger Say." *AML Annual, 1994.* 2:19-33. This presidential essay was delivered in 1991 and published in the 1994 *Annual,* a two-volume that compiled papers given since 1988 during a publishing hiatus. An edited and abridged version appears in Lavina Fielding Anderson and Eugene England, eds. *Tending the Garden: Essays in Mormon Literature.* Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996.

---. "Imagining [the Fun] in Mormon Marriage, Part I: The Mythic, the Novelistic, and Jack Weyland's Charley." *AML Annual,* 1997, 128-37.

Kelly, Thomas. *A Father's Gifts.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984.

Packer, Boyd K. "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord." Provo, UT: Brigham Young UP, 1976.

Tanner, Stephen L. "E. B. White and the Theory of Humor." *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 2.1 (1989): 43-53.

Twain, Mark. See Clemens, Samuel Langhorne.

Year-in-a-Box Calendar. Indianapolis, IN: Day Dream, 1997.